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CAUCASIAN FOLK-TALES

▼ ADOLF DIRR ▼

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SELECTED & TRANSLATED FROM
THE ORIGINALS BY ADOLF DIRR



TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH
BY
LUCY MENZIES

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INTRODUCTION

THE Caucasus is a land with which the earliest folk-lore of Europe is connected. One has only to think of the Argonauts and of Prometheus to be reminded of the long ages through which the mountainous country between Pontus and the Caspian Sea, between Europe and Asia, has been connected with man's inherent love of story-telling.

Just as a map of the races of the Caucasus is variegated, showing more than sixty different peoples, so also is its folk-lore. It is significant that the Caucasus lies almost in the centre of a region round which the great migrations of European pre-Asiatic peoples took place. In the south and south-west, the ancient kingdoms of the Hethites, Sumerians, the Babylonians and Assyrians rose up and died away. In the east, the fierce struggle between Iran and Turan, made known to us by the *Schah-Nameh*, was fought out. The Scythians and Sauromatians wandered about the north. In later times Huns and Magyars, Alans and Avars, Slavs and Tatars moved to and fro. The Romans enslaved the Albanians, the Parthians strove for possession of the whole region. The Sassanides introduced the teaching of Zarathustra, against which Christianity waged a long and arduous warfare. Then the oncoming wave of Islam swept over the land, penetrating even to the innermost recesses of the mountains, without being everywhere victorious. The Mongol invasions and the Tatar hordes next drew the country into their vortices, and finally the Muscovite kingdom stirred up strife between the Caucasians, the Turks and the Persians. But the Muscovite domination brought peace for a century, till the outbreak of the world-war, the Caucasus being protected by the Russians from the lust of conquest of its neighbours.

What history tells—and of course merely the broad

outline can be given here—is fully borne out by philology. Half a dozen Tatar dialects, three or four Iranian, an ancient form of Iranian, Ossetian, Armenian, Greek and the native Caucasian tongues are all found in this region. Kinship with Semitic languages has been claimed for Georgian with its dialects and related tongues, and it has been attempted to separate the Caucasian elements out of the Finnish-Magyar tongues, as well as many traces of ancient and modern migrations. We are driven to the conclusion that the Caucasus represents an island lying in the maelstrom of the wanderings of the peoples. In the remoter valleys traces of many different nationalities have been left behind, and with them sagas, beliefs, manners, customs and languages. Whatsoever passed eastwards or westwards over the old trade or military routes, either to north or south of the mountains, across the one ancient pass which leads over them, or along the western shore of the Caspian Sea—all these various migrations left people and things and spiritual influences among the rocks of the Caucasus.

That explains the variety of the Caucasian tales, the wealth of Caucasian folk-lore. I mean variety as regards the origin of the tales. A professional philologist like myself may be allowed to arrange the different tales in their proper places, without explaining the reasons for his arrangement, but I should like to explain to the reader how it happens that he meets with such old favourites as *Puss-in-Boots*, *Table spread Thyself*, *Donkey stretch Thyself* and *The Cudgel in the Sack*.

No story spreads so quickly as one which is easy and pleasant to tell. The truth of that statement can be proved in any of the larger Caucasian towns. There is, for example, in Tiflis a class of pedlars called Kinto, who are chiefly remarkable for their readiness to fight, their cunning and their mother-wit. Kinto tales are innumerable, just as the Mikosch tales and others of the same species are in Germany. But during a ten years' stay in the Caucasus I did not hear one single tale that I did not recognise as an old favourite from early European sources. The contents have not really

altered, the story has simply—as in other lands—crystallised round the personality circumstances happened to offer. A character regarded with boundless affection in the Caucasus is *Mullah Nasreddin*. He is our good old friend out of *Ak Schehir*, the Turkish *Chodja Nasreddin*. In the Caucasus one not only hears the stories about him common in Turkey, but countless others as well. He is witty or dull, cunning or stupid, energetic or indolent, great-hearted or mean according as the rôle given him demands. He represents the highly specialised type of our comic papers; he is that type for a people who have not yet specialised in such things. Nasreddin owes his widespread popularity to the Armenians and especially to those driven out of Turkey, who were familiar with Chodja's merry pranks.

The following case is even more remarkable. In the year 1904 I spent the summer in a shepherd's hut high up in Thuschetia, collecting information about Batsian, a Tchetchen language. The natives up there are a wide-awake, energetic race, worthy of a high civilisation. But as they all speak Georgian and many of them also read and write it, it was almost impossible for me to get genuine native material. At last a very old man volunteered; he could tell me traditional tales, he said. I wrote and wrote to his dictation, but every story he told me seemed curiously familiar. When at last he told me the Tell story almost word for word, I remonstrated. I said I knew it all already, that it was not native material. But he insisted it was a story he had heard from old natives in his youth. It was only afterwards that he remembered—and I do not doubt his good faith—that he had read the story in a Georgian reader when he was at school at Thelaw. The story of *The Beautiful Helena* probably came in a similar way—though not through a school book—to the Kabardians, who, as a Circassian tribe, would certainly come into direct or indirect contact with Grecian colonies on the north-east shores of the Black Sea.¹

¹ In his commentary on the tales, W. Müller leaves the question of origin or borrowing unsolved. The Greeks knew the Circassians by the name of *Ζυγχοι* or *Ζυγοι*.

In a volume dealing with a region so little known to us in Central and Western Europe, I could not make up my mind to restrict myself entirely to pure fairy tales, but have included also examples of heroic sagas, fables, national romances and so on. The titles of the various tales are partly chosen by myself, partly taken over from the originals.

The translation is as literal as is consistent with legibility and the spirit of the original languages. . . . The notes on the sources only state from what language the tale is taken; they do not attempt to indicate the wide region over which the tale is to be met with. Of many of the tales I could have given two or three widely different readings.

As to the pronunciation, "j" is to be pronounced as in French, "y" as a modified *ö* sound; ph, th and kh are to be sharply sounded (ph *not* like f, for instance). The reader will find notes as to the names of the races, etc., on the following page.

ADOLF DIRR.

MUNICH, *November* 1919.

NOTES ON THE VARIOUS RACES INHABIT- ING THE CAUCASUS, Etc.

Abkhasians live on the eastern shore of the Black Sea. Their language is peculiar to their own race, but is related to the tongues of the North-West Caucasus.

Aghuls, a Lesghian people of Central Daghestan.

Artschinians, resemble the Aghuls.

Avarians, the most powerful Lesghian race.

Imeretians, of Georgian extraction.

Kabardians, the most important Circassian people.

Karatschai-ians, a Tatar people of North-West Caucasus.

Kumüks, a Tatar race of North-East Daghestan.

Kürinians, a Lesghian race of South-East Daghestan.

Mingrelians, one of the peoples speaking a language related to Georgian, and living on the eastern shore of the Black Sea.

Laks or *Ghazimucks*, of Lesghian extraction.

Ossetes, a people with an Iranian language; possibly descended from the Alans, Central Caucasus.

Suanetians, a mountain race of Western Caucasus; language related to Georgian and Mingrelian.

Tabassaranians, a Lesghian people of Eastern Daghestan.

Tatians, speak a modern Iranian dialect: the so-called mountain Jews in Daghestan speak Tatian. Story No. 27 comes from a mountain Jew.

Tchetchens, a people of North-East Caucasus. Their language is related to Lesghian.

Udians, a small people with Lesghian tongue. They only inhabit two villages, Warthaschen and Nisch, east of Nuchi in Trans-Caucasia.

Zachurians, a Lesghian race living in Upper Samur.

The Nart Sagas. The Ossetes and their neighbours, the Kabardians, Tchetchens and Balkars, believe the Narts to have been a race of giants who inhabited Northern Caucasus before its present inhabitants. The Kabardians and the Ossetes call them *Narts*, the Tchetchens *Nārts*, and the

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word, to the Avars and Kumüks at least, signifies *giant*. Many ruins, rocks, plains and mountains still have names connected with the Nart Sagas. These stories probably have their origin in a very ancient heroic saga and are much intermixed with mythological features. This material still awaits its student. The first necessity would be to establish what exactly the ancient Nart sagas are, and what foreign matter has grouped itself round the chief figures of these sagas.

The Rustum Sagas. As far as I can make out, most of the Rustum stories come from the south-eastern part of the Caucasus, that is from those districts in which the Persian influence could work most powerfully. Many of the sagas are connected with the hero *Scha-Nahme*; but it is the names that are borrowed rather than the material. So that here also it is a case of grouping the material to hand round the personality of a famous, more or less mythical figure. One can trace that in the stories dealing with the companions of the hero, as in the Uidian Rustum saga and in the Georgian fairy tale of the Dreamer.

A. D.

Chan means, roughly speaking, the governor of a province.

Divs or *Deevs* are supposed to have been the race of giants who inhabited the world before Adam. They also are supposed to have fallen into sin, and to have been therefore banished by the Almighty to the Caucasus. The heights of Elbruz and Ararat are supposed to be the headquarters of these fabulous giants.

Djinns, *Jinns* or *Genii* are supposed to have been created out of fire before Adam. The kingdom of the Djinns is among the highest peaks of the Caucasus. Believing Djinns are said to be beneficent though irritable, but unbelieving Djinns are malicious and hostile to human beings.

Pilaw is a kind of porridge prepared from the grain most abundant in the district. In Armenia and Georgia, for instance, rice-porridge is eaten, baked, as pilaw.

L. M.

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CAUCASIAN FOLK-TALES

I.—FAIRY TALES

I. THE FISHERMAN'S SON

ONCE upon a time there was a fisherman who had a son. One day he went to fish and took his son with him. When they came to a great river, he called on the name of God and shot his net to the happiness and good fortune of his son. He caught so many fish that he could hardly pull the net ashore, and as he looked among them he saw a wonderful blood-red fish. He said to his son, "I will go home and bring the *arba*" (the two-wheeled cart used in the Caucasus). "You look after the fish in the meantime, and take special care not to let the red fish out of your sight."

After the father had gone, the son took up the red fish, stroked it and petted it, and said at last, "Is it not a sin to kill such a beautiful fish? I will rather let him go free!" No sooner said than done. He threw the fish back into the water; but it swam to the shore, thanked him politely, and taking a bone out of one of its fins, it said:

"Because you have been kind to me, I give you this bone. If you are ever in difficulty, come to this bank, take the bone out of your pocket, call me by name, and I will come at once and help you."

The youth took the bone and put it in his pocket. The fish, with a sweep of his tail, shot down into the depths.

But when the father came back and saw what his son had done, he was furious. He pushed his son from him, saying: "Get out of my sight. I never want to see you again as long as I live!"

So the fisherman's son went away. All of a sudden he saw a stag coming towards him. It was quite exhausted and the huntsmen with their dogs were hard behind it. The youth's heart was sore for the stag. He ran towards it, took it by the horns and called out to the huntsmen that they should be ashamed to hunt such a beast, that it was a tame stag. The huntsmen believed him and went away. When they were a good distance off, the youth let the stag go. But it pulled out a hair and gave it to the youth, saying:

"Because you have been kind to me, I give you this hair. If you are ever in difficulty, take it out of your pocket, call me by name and I will come and help you."

The youth took the hair, put it in his pocket and went on his way. Whether he went far or not, who knows? But all at once he saw an exhausted crane, followed by an eagle which had all but reached its prey. The youth was sorry for the crane: he took his stick and threw it at the eagle. It was frightened and flew away. When the crane came to itself, it pulled out a feather and gave it to the youth, saying:

"Because you have been kind to me, I give you this feather. If you are ever in difficulty, come to this field, take the feather out of your pocket, call me by name and I will come and help you." The youth put the feather in his pocket and went on his way.

As he went he saw a pack of greyhounds chasing a fox and coming nearer and nearer to their prey. The youth was sorry for the fox and hid him under the skirts of his coat. When the greyhounds were far away,

he let the fox go. But first it pulled out a hair, gave it to the youth and said:

"Because you were kind to me, I give you this hair. If you are ever in difficulty, take it out of your pocket, call me by name, and I will come at once and help you." The youth put the hair in his pocket and went on his way.

Had he gone far or not? Who knows? But presently he came to a castle in which there dwelt a beautiful maiden. She had promised to marry whoever could hide himself so that she could not find him. The fisherman's son wanted to court her for himself. He went into the castle and asked to see the maiden.

"Why have you come?" she asked him.

"I want to marry you," answered the youth.

"Well, if you can hide yourself in some place where I cannot find you, then I will be your wife. But if you fail, you will certainly be taken to the gallows," said the maiden.

The youth agreed to this and asked only that he might hide himself four times. And that was allowed.

He went out of the castle, ran to the river, took his fish-bone out of his pocket, and called to the red fish. He came at once, greeted the youth, and asked, "What is wrong then, my good friend?"

The youth told him the story—"And I must hide myself in such a place that even the Devil would not be able to find me."

The fish took the youth on its back, dived with him to the bottom of the sea, put him there in a cave, and floated right above him in order to hide him the better. But the maiden looked in her mirror, looked long, and sought everywhere till at last she saw the youth at the bottom of the sea. And she was amazed when she discovered him there.

"What a wizard of a fellow he must be!" she said to herself.

The next day the youth came proudly into the castle.

"Oh, you! That was quite useless!" said the maiden. "I saw you quite clearly as you sat down at the bottom of the sea and the red fish tried to hide you."

"Heaven help me!" thought the youth. "What a wizard she must be!" He left the castle to look for another place to hide. He ran to a meadow, pulled out the stag's hair and called the stag. It was instantly there beside him, greeted him and asked: "What is wrong then, beloved friend?"

The youth told him the story—"And I must hide myself where even the Devil would not be able to find me!"

The stag took him on its back and ran like the wind. Behind the ninth mountain he stopped, hid the youth in a cave and stood himself before the opening. But the maiden looked again in her mirror, sought and sought, and at last espied him after much searching. The following day the youth came proudly up to her.

"Oh, that also was quite useless!" she said. "I saw you quite well. You were behind the ninth mountain in a cave and the stag stood in front of you." The youth became more and more perplexed and began to feel anxious.

He left the castle again, and sought a third hiding-place. When he came to a meadow, he pulled out his feather and called the crane. It flew down at once, greeted him and asked: "What is wrong, good friend?"

The youth told him, "I must hide myself in such a place that even the Devil would not be able to find me."

The crane took him on its back and flew aloft to

heaven, where he hid the youth and hovered in the air below him. The maiden took her mirror and looked in all directions and could not find him. But at last she looked up to the sky and saw the youth as he hid in the heavens. She was full of amazement: "*What* a wizard he must be!" But when the youth came to her the next day, she said, "Oh, that was quite useless! I saw you quite well! You were holding on to heaven, and the crane was hovering below you."

The youth was astonished and now became alarmed. "Ah me! if she finds me the fourth time too, then I am lost!" He left the castle to hide himself for the last time.

He went to a meadow again, pulled out the fox's hair and called the fox. It sprang forward at once, greeted the youth and asked: "What is wrong, dear friend?"

The youth told his story—"I must hide myself somewhere where this sharp-eyed maiden cannot see me, otherwise I go at once to the gallows!"

"Have no fear," said the fox. "Go to her and ask for two weeks' delay. Then I will hide you in such a place that she may seek for you till she dies, but will never find you."

The youth did as the fox advised him. And the fox dug a hole under the mountain on which the maiden's castle stood, and hollowed out a passage to a spot right under the divan on which the maiden sat. And there he hid the youth.

The maiden took her mirror and began to seek. She looked to the East, she looked to the West, then to the South, then to the North, then she looked up in the heavens and down in the sea, all in vain. She could not find him anywhere.

"Where are you then, you wizard?" she cried at last. "Come here, for I cannot find you anywhere!"

From under her divan came the voice of the youth' and immediately afterwards he sprang out himself.

So he was the victor in the contest with the maiden. They celebrated their marriage the next day with such a splendid feast that even the multitudes had birds' milk to drink.

2. CINDER-STICK

THERE was once upon a time a young married couple. But the husband was lazy; he did nothing and refused to work. He sat all day long by the fireside, a little stick in his hand with which he poked about among the ashes. That was why he was called Cinder-Stick.

"Husband!" said his wife one day, "get up and stir yourself! Go out and work and bring something into the house! If you do not, then I cannot stay with you."

That did no good. He still went on sitting beside the fire and would not stir outside the house. But on Easter Sunday he made up his mind to go to church. When he came home again he found the door locked against him and his wife refused to let him in. So he asked her to give him a bagful of ashes, an awl and a fresh cheese, and then slouched lazily away.

We do not know whether he went far or not. But at last he came to a broad river and saw, sitting on the opposite bank, a giant Div¹ drinking greedily from the river.

Cinder-Stick got very frightened, but what could he do? There were only two things open to him, either to go home to his wife, or to stay and serve as breakfast for the Div. He thought it over, up and down, and round about. And this was the plan he finally thought out.

¹ See note, p. x.

He made a hole in his sack, then swung it quickly round and round his head, raising a tremendous cloud of dust.

The Div was astonished; he was even alarmed. He took up a stone and commanded Cinder-Stick to squeeze water out of a stone. He took up his new cheese, squeezed it as hard as he could, so that water ran out of it. Then he called across to the Div: "Listen to me! Come over here, let me climb up on your shoulders and then carry me across the river. I do not wish to wet my feet!"

The Div obeyed, took him up on his shoulders, and said, "Oh! how light you are!"

"That is because I am holding on to heaven with one hand," said Cinder-Stick. "If I leave go, you will not be able to carry me."

"Let us see," said the Div. "Leave go!"

Cinder-Stick took his awl and began to bore it into the Div's head. The Div began to roar and told him to catch hold of heaven again. When they arrived at the opposite bank, "Get down," said the Div, "now it is time for a meal!"

Cinder-Stick was terrified, but what could he do? He had to get down. When he saw the Div's house, it pleased him very much. There was an enormous loaf of bread in the oven. The Div said he must go and see about dinner, and asked Cinder-Stick to look after the bread, and watch that it did not burn. When Cinder-Stick saw that one side was well browned, he wanted to turn the loaf over. But he could not. As he struggled with it, he slipped and fell under the loaf. He exerted all his strength, but the loaf was too heavy, he could not get out from underneath it. At length the other Divs came home. When they saw him lying there under the loaf, they were astonished and asked him what he was doing there.

"I had a dreadful pain in my inside," answered Cinder-Stick, "and so I laid the warm loaf on it to make it better. It is better now, you can take the loaf away!" Then the Divs wanted wine for dinner. One of them took a huge jug, gave it to Cinder-Stick, and said: "Here, like a good fellow! Outside in the court you will find a wine-barrel.¹ Go and bring some wine!"

Cinder-Stick was frightened when he saw the huge jug, but he took it and went outside. The Divs waited and waited for his return, but as he never came they went out to see what had happened. There stood Cinder-Stick, spade in hand, about to dig out the wine-barrel.

"What on earth are you doing there?" they asked.

"Oh, it will be much easier to take the barrel out!" he answered. "What is the use of my running backwards and forwards with that little jug?"

But now the Divs began to get alarmed. "If nine of us can hardly move that wine-barrel empty, and he alone is going to bring it in full, there is something strange about it," they said; and they filled the jug themselves and sat down to dinner. But when one of them coughed, his cough blew Cinder-Stick right up to the ceiling. The rest looked up at him in astonishment, as he clung there to a rafter.

"What are you doing up there?" they asked him.

"How dare you cough in my presence?" he answered. "I will pull this stick out of the roof and warm your flanks with it!"

The Divs became more and more frightened. "Nine of us together can hardly move one of these rafters," they said among themselves, "and he calls it merely a 'stick'!" So frightened were they that they left the

¹ The huge Caucasian wine-barrels are higher than an ordinary man and are generally sunk half their height into the ground.

house and scattered in all directions. And Cinder-Stick settled down comfortably in the house they had forsaken.

One of the Divs, on his flight, met a fox. He asked him: "Where are you running to, Div? What has happened to you?"

"What! Where am I running to?" said the Div. "A man has come to our house who has nearly swallowed us all up!"

But the fox laughed out when the Div told him the whole story. "Why, that is Cinder-Stick, a poor, starving wretch!" he said. "His wife drove him out of the house because of his laziness. I know them both quite well. I have eaten many of their hens. And you were frightened at that miserable creature!"

"I do not believe what you say!" said the Div.

"Come along, then! I'll soon show you. Here, bind me with this string!" And the fox himself tied the string round his neck, and the other end round the Div's body. Thus they turned back together to the house of the Divs. When Cinder-Stick saw them coming he was frightened at first, but then took courage and began to shout abuse.

"Ha, you wretched fellow!" he raged at the fox, "you were to catch me twelve Divs and here you bring me only one! Just wait . . ."

But the Div was so terrified that he tore off the string the fox had tied round him and ran away till he got beyond the ninth mountain.

Cinder-Stick took all that belonged to the Divs, loaded it on camels, and set off to rejoin his wife. She was pleased to see him with his booty, and they lived happily ever after.

3. THE PARASITE

THERE was once a man who was both lazy and stupid. He had nothing he could call his own, and he would not work. From one he begged food, from another drink, from a third something else. So he went on from day to day and knew neither pride nor shame.

He had good-natured neighbours who helped him, even though his begging did not please them. Whenever he came into sight, it was, "There is the Parasite! He is sure to want something more from us." But he pretended not to hear, and went on begging. At last everyone got tired of him, and did not want to hear anything more about him.

That was awkward for the Parasite. But work?

No! that he would not do.

"People are no use," he complained, "they have not even sympathy for a poor wretch. I will rather betake myself to Him who is more gracious than they!"

So he hid himself somewhere, raised his hands towards heaven and entreated: "Oh God! Thou who hast made me, Creator of the World! Give me, a miserable wretch, something to live on!"

But nothing came, however much he looked about him and sought for it. For a second and a third time he repeated his prayer.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he heard suddenly from near at hand, "just open your mouth wide!" And the boys of the neighbourhood stood there and laughed him to scorn. The Parasite was ashamed and made up his mind to climb a high mountain, where he would be nearer God and where there would be nobody to laugh at him.

On the way he met a wolf.

"Man, man! Where are you going?" the wolf asked.

"To God," answered the Parasite.

"If that is so, please ask about this—I have already made a meal off every living creature, but for all that I do not get any fatter. Please ask what I should eat. I will wait here till you come back."

"Very good!" said the Parasite, and went on his way. Soon he came to an oak tree.

"Man, whither away?" asked the oak.

"To God."

"If that is so, then do me a favour and ask why one side of me has withered up."

"Gladly will I do that," said the Parasite, and went on his way, and came to a river.

"Man, man! whither goest thou?" a fish called out to him from the water.

"To God."

"Please, please ask why I am blind in my left eye."

"That is easily done," answered the Parasite, and went on his way. When he came to the ridge of the mountain he found a stag, who asked what he sought up there.

"I must speak with God. That is why I have come up here."

The stag was a good natured beast, and said to him: "You are now on the top of the mountain, but if you want to go still higher, you may use my antlers as a ladder."

The Parasite did not wait to be asked twice, mounted the stag, and climbed up on its horns. Suddenly he heard a voice from above:

"Mortal, whither wilt thou?"

"To Thee, merciful God!" answered the trembling Parasite.

"What dost thou desire from me?"

"Lord, I have nothing to live on. Be merciful to me."

"Go home and thou wilt find what thou seekest!" answered the Almighty.

Then the Parasite brought forward the requests of the wolf, the oak and the fish, received the information they wanted, thanked the Almighty, thanked the stag, and set out on his way home. He was so happy that he danced rather than walked. Soon he arrived again at the river.

"Well?" asked the fish.

"There is a diamond sticking in your left gill. Take it out and you will see again," answered the Parasite.

"If you will be so kind, please do it for me!" asked the fish.

The Parasite took the diamond out of the gill and the left eye recovered its sight. To show his gratitude, the fish gave him the diamond, but the Parasite threw it into the water.

"What use is that to me? I will find all that I need when I get home," he said proudly, and went on.

"That must be a stupid fellow," thought the fish and swam joyfully away.

The Parasite soon came to the oak tree.

"Did you learn anything of use?" it asked him.

"Certainly! There is a large wine-jar buried under your withered side. Take it out and the sap will be able to run up again."

The oak also begged for his help. And the Parasite gladly dug in the ground beside its withered side. The wine-jar was full to the brim of gold and silver, and the grateful oak tree gave it all to the Parasite.

"What should I do with it, when I am going to find all that I need at home?" answered he, and gave the wine-jar a kick so that all the gold and silver fell into the hole.

"He must be a stupid fellow!" the oak tree thought; "even if he could not use it himself, he could surely have given it away!" And it shook its branches to show how astonished it was at the Parasite's behaviour.

The Parasite next came to the wolf.

"What answer do you bring me?" asked the wolf.

"I am to tell you that human flesh will make you fat."

"Hm, hm! So, so!" said the wolf. "Well, you are yourself a human being!" and he opened wide his great jaws. . . .

The next day some shepherd lads found scraps of clothing lying about there and brought them to the village.

The people recognised them as belonging to the Parasite, and were sorry for his fate although they had not liked him. But one old man said to a boy:

"There you are! The world means work, and the lazy man takes badly with it. And so his life and his death are both tragedy and comedy!"

4. THE MASTER AND HIS PUPILS

THERE was once upon a time a poor peasant who had a son. One day his wife said to him: "You must make the boy learn something, otherwise nothing will come of him! What will happen if he remains as ignorant as you are?"

That did not please the peasant at all, but his wife gave him no peace. So he set out one day with his son to seek a master. On the way they both became thirsty, and as they saw a spring they drank their fill and stood up again with the words: "Ah! how good you are!"

Then suddenly a devil came out of the spring, changed into a man, and said to the peasant:

"What is it, man? What do you want?"

The peasant told him what he wanted.

"Give me your son," said the devil, "and leave him a year with me. I will teach him. Then come back; if you know him again, you can take him with you, but if not, then he stays with me."

There were many other boys with the devil, and he had got them all in the same way. In the course of a year they changed so much that their parents could not recognise them. But of course the peasant did not know that; and so he agreed to the devil's proposal, left his boy there and set out for home.

When the year was over, he went to see his son. The devil was not at home at the time and in the court there stood a great number of boys. The peasant looked over them again and again, but he could not see his son. But the boy knew his father at once and ran to him.

"Our master is coming," he said, "he will change us all into doves and order us to fly up. As we fly away I will be the first, and when we come back I will be the last. So when the master asks you which is your son, you will know."

How delighted the peasant was, and with what hopes he waited for the master's return!

He arrived after a little time, called his pupils together, changed them into doves, and told them to fly away. And the peasant's son was truly the last to arrive as they flew back.

"Now, which of these doves is your son?" asked the master.

The peasant pointed to the last. The devil was very angry: he saw at once what must have happened, but what could he do? He had to give the peasant back his son.

Then father and son set out on the homeward journey. On their way they met a troop of nobles hunting. A hare was tearing along in front with a hound behind, which, however, could not catch the hare. The boy said to his father, "Creep into this thicket and chase out a hare. I will change myself into a hound and catch the hare before the eyes of these nobles. Then they will urge you to sell them your hound. Refuse at first and then sell me for a big price. Afterwards I will change myself back in a moment and follow you."

No sooner said than done. The father went into the thicket, raised a hare, the son changed himself into a greyhound, ran after the hare, caught him and killed him before the eyes of the nobles.

They naturally wanted to have the hound, and they came to the peasant and asked him to sell his hound. He pretended at first that he would not sell him; but as they offered more and more, he agreed at last, put the money in his pocket, and gave them the hound. The nobles put the animal on a leash and led it away.

Shortly afterwards they raised another hare in a clump of bushes, loosed the hound they had just bought and set him after the hare. The hound chased Long Ears for some distance, then when he was out of sight of the huntsmen he changed himself back into a boy, and ran after his father.

But when they had walked on a little they began to think they had not got enough money. "We must get some more," said the boy to his father.

And soon afterwards they actually fell in with a second troop of nobles, hawking pheasants. They had loosed their falcon, but it had brought them nothing. The boy quickly changed himself into a falcon and caught a pheasant in the air.

The nobles were beside themselves with delight; so greatly did this falcon please them that they began to bargain with the peasant about the price of his bird. And he did not let him go cheap! Then he put the money in his pocket and went on his way. The huntsmen wanted to try their new falcon at once, and so loosed it after the next pheasant they saw. The falcon chased the pheasant a long distance away, then changed himself again into a boy and ran after his father.

By this time they had collected a good deal of money, but it was still too little for the boy, and so he proposed something else to his father.

"I will change myself into a horse, you must mount me, ride me into the town and sell me. But do not forget this, you must not sell me to a man with glistening eyes, and in any case take off the bridle first, otherwise I will not be able to change myself back again."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before he became a beautiful horse. His father sprang on his back, and rode him into the town. There they found many purchasers anxious to buy the animal. But the most anxious to get him was a man with bright, glistening eyes. When anyone bid a *rubel* more, he at once bid several *tuman* more (a *tuman* is ten *rubels*). Finally, this wealthy man overcame the peasant, who sold him the horse. The man with the glistening eyes bought the bridle too, mounted the horse and rode away.

How delighted he was that his pupil had again fallen into his hands! He rode to his home and shut him up in a dark room.

The pupil became sad and ill, and wondered always how he could escape, but found no way. And so time went on.

One day he noticed that a ray of sunshine had

penetrated his stall. As he looked to see how it had got in, he noticed a crack in the door. He quickly changed himself into a mouse and crept out. When his master saw him, he changed himself into a cat and ran after the mouse.

And there the mouse ran, with the cat after it! The cat had already opened its mouth to seize its prey, when the mouse changed itself into a fish and leapt into the water. But in a second the master was a net and swam along behind the fish. It was just about to be caught, when it changed itself into a pheasant and the master at once became a falcon pursuing it. The pheasant already felt the claws of its enemy, as it changed itself into a red-cheeked apple and let itself fall down into the lap of the king. At once the master became the knife which the king held in his hand. He was just about to cut the apple in two . . . when suddenly no apple was there, but a heap of millet with a hen in front of it with its chickens . . . the master. They picked and picked till only one grain remained. That became at the last moment a needle, the hen and chickens a thread in the eye of the needle. Then the needle became hot red, and . . . the thread was burned up.

The needle changed itself finally into a boy, who went home to his father and lived happily ever after.

5. THE DREAMER

ONCE upon a time there was a boy who had a step-mother. One day she shook out some corn to dry on the threshing floor and told her step-son to look after it. He went to sleep, and while he slept the hens came and began to pick the corn. The step-mother was very angry and beat the poor boy.

"Mother, mother!" he cried, "listen, I will tell you something."

"Well, what is it?"

"Listen to what I dreamt! With one foot I stood right in the middle of Baghdad, with the other on the outskirts of the town; the sun rested on one foot and the moon on the other, while I held the stars in my hands and on my face!"

The step-mother was so pleased with this dream that she said: "Give me your dream at once."

"But it was only a dream, how can I give it to you?" asked the boy.

He was beaten again, and driven out of the house.

The boy wandered away till he came to the castle of a king.

"Whither away?" asked the king. "What do you seek?"

"So-and-so are my affairs," answered the boy; "my step-mother beat me and drove me out of the house because I could not give her my dream."

The king asked the boy to tell him his dream, and he too wanted to have it.

"But I cannot," said the boy, "it was a dream! It came and went away again. . . ."

But the king had the boy thrown into a deep pit. Now this king had a beautiful daughter. She was sorry for the boy; she secretly brought him food and let it down into the pit.

This king was King over all the West. And the King of the East had already asked for the hand of his beautiful daughter, but in vain. Now one day the King of the East sent the King of the West four mares, with the message:

"Guess which is the mother, which is the youngest

foal, which the second, and which the oldest. If you guess right, it is well; if not, then your daughter belongs to me."

That put the king and his daughter into an awkward position, for they had no idea which of the mares was the youngest or the oldest. The king's daughter said to the youth, as she brought him his food one day: "Poor dreamer! what will happen to you now? If I have to go with the King of the East, then you will starve." And she told him the story about the four mares.

"Do not be anxious," said the youth, "I will help you. Give the horses a good meal, put plenty of salt in it, and then lock them in their stalls. Do not let them out till the next day, and then when you open the stable door you will know. First the mother will come out to drink, then the youngest foal, then the second one, and last, the oldest."

The king's daughter told her father all that the youth had said, and everything happened as he had foretold.

As this trick had not succeeded, the King of the East next shot an arrow which fell in front of the castle of the King of the West and stuck in the ground so that no one could pull it out.

The king's daughter went again to the Dreamer and asked him what was to be done.

"Do not be alarmed," he replied, "I will come out of my pit to-night, and pull out the arrow."

And so he did. He pulled the arrow out, laid it on the ground and went back to his pit.

When the king found the arrow next morning, he cried, "Who has pulled out the arrow? To him will I give my daughter."

Everyone who heard that wanted to claim that they had done it. But the king was on his guard: "Whosoever

pulled out the arrow must now carry it away!" he commanded. But nobody could move the arrow from the spot where it lay.

"Father," said the king's daughter, "perhaps it was the Dreamer!"

The vizier was sent to bring the Dreamer. He came, lifted the arrow and shot it back into the castle of the King of the East.

The King of the West was overjoyed, and gave his daughter to the Dreamer. Two weeks, three weeks only did the newly-married pair spend together, then the Dreamer set out to make war on the King of the East.

When he had travelled some distance on his way, he saw a man ploughing a field, but as he ploughed he swallowed the clods he turned up.

"You over there," he cried out to him, "that must be a difficult business, to swallow these clods?"

"Oh no!" he replied. "*That* was difficult, what the Dreamer did, to marry the king's daughter and now to wage war."

"I am the Dreamer! Come with me, we will be comrades in adventure."

They went on together and came to a man who sat by the brink of the sea and drank the salt water greedily.

"That is surely a difficult thing to do, to swallow so much salt water?" asked the Dreamer.

"Not at all!" he answered. "*That* was difficult, what the Dreamer did, to marry the king's daughter and now to wage war."

"I am the Dreamer! Come with me, we will be companions in adventure."

And he too joined the others, and the three went on together. Presently they saw a man who had bound mill-stones to his feet and was chasing a hare. They were

much astonished, and called out to the man, it was surely a difficult feat he was performing.

"What, difficult?" he answered. "*That* was difficult, what the Dreamer managed to do, he who married the king's daughter and now wages war."

"I am the Dreamer! Come with us."

And now they were four. Presently they came to a man who had put one ear to the ground, and seemed to be listening to something and speaking now and then.

"What are you doing there?" they asked him.

"The ants are waging war in the underworld; I am helping them and giving them advice."

Again the Dreamer said that must be difficult and received the same answer as from the others. This man also joined himself to them, and now they were five. They went on their way and soon saw a man standing, with a bow in his hand, looking up into the sky.

"What are you looking for?" they asked.

"Three days ago I shot an arrow, and it is only now coming back!" answered the man.

"Oho! There you have done something very difficult," praised the Dreamer, but received the same answer from this man as from the others.

Now they were six. They went on and met a man who had crept up to a flock of doves, and was changing their wings without their noticing what he was doing.

"Oh, oh! that is really difficult," declared the Dreamer, and heard from that man, too, exactly the same as he had heard from the others.

And now they were seven.

Presently a man came towards them who was a priest, and had bound his church on his shoulders; wherever it seemed to him good, he put it down and held service in it.

"Priest, priest! That is now something really difficult!"

But the priest would not agree to that; *that* was difficult, he said, which the Dreamer had done.

And now they were eight. And the eight of them went to the King of the East and asked him to give them his daughter. But he would not do that without bargaining.

"I must know first who you are, and then we will speak about my daughter. I will get my baker to bake bread straight on for three whole days; if you can eat it all up in one day, you may have my daughter, if not, then I will cut off your heads." So said the king.

"Good, get to work!" said the comrades to the clod-eater. "If you can eat clods of earth, bread will be no difficulty to you."

"Leave that to me," he replied, "I will not leave a single crumb over."

And they brought great stacks of bread, but the clod-eater swallowed it all—not the tiniest crumb remained.

"Good!" said the king; "now you must drink wine. If you can drink my wine-barrel empty ¹—at one sitting, mind!—then you may have my daughter—otherwise your heads."

"Good!" said the friends; "now it is your turn, sea-water-drinker. If you can drink salt water, you will surely be able to manage the wine!"

"Here with the wine, and leave everything else to me!" said the sea-water-drinker. When he saw the barrel he laughed and said:

"Ah! that is only a mouthful, that will be finished in a moment!"—and drank the whole barrel empty.

"Very good!" said the king. "Now we will have water

¹ An enormous Caucasian wine-barrel, which it takes six waggon-loads of wine to fill.

brought to us from a place three days' journey away. You send one of your men, and I send one of mine. If mine comes back first, then there is no daughter for you, and your heads are forfeit; but if yours comes back first, you may have my child."

Now it was the turn of him who had chased the hare with mill-stones tied to his feet. "Just leave it to me," he said, and set out with the king's man. When they had travelled one day, the king's man was already far behind, but the chaser of hares was walking briskly. Suddenly it occurred to the king's messenger to play a trick on the Dreamer's friend. "I'll tell you what," he said, "we will go slower. Why should we exhaust ourselves like this? Let us rest for a little and then go on again."

The other trusted him; they sat down and ate and drank. But the king's messenger dropped a sleeping-powder into his rival's wine. He went to sleep, but the other got up, ran and ran, accomplished the two days' journey, came to the water, filled his vessel and set out home. He had already travelled a whole day on the homeward journey, and the chaser of hares still slept on.

But the Dreamer said to the archer: "Look here! Look and listen! It seems to me the king's man is coming back, but where is ours?"

The archer looked into the distance and said, "Alas! our man has gone to sleep when only half-way there. The other has filled his vessel already and is on the homeward journey."

"Help, help!" cried all the seven.

The archer took his bow and shot an arrow which hit one of the mill-stones tied to the feet of the sleeping man. He wakened up, ran like the wind to the water, filled his vessel and easily overtook the king's messenger.

"Very good," said the king to the Dreamer. "Now we will celebrate the wedding."

The daughter was brought, and she and the Dreamer were betrothed. There was a splendid feast, but the king ordered his people to put poison in the food of his stranger guests, that they might all die.

This secret conversation, however, was overheard by one of the eight—by him, namely, who had listened to the ants in the underworld. He told it to him who had changed the wings of the doves, who then changed the plates without the king's servants noticing it, and all who ate from the plates of poisoned food died on the spot.

Then there was nothing more to be done. But the king tried once again. "Very good!" he said. "But produce a man who can carry away the dowry!"

Here the priest who carried his church on his back came to the rescue: "Just leave it to me," he said; "I will not only carry away the dowry, but you can seat yourselves on the top."

So they loaded him up with everything belonging to the king's daughter. "Bring it all here, bring it all here!" cried the priest, as if he could not get enough. Then they set out and everyone returned to his own home.

But five or six years had passed by this time. The Dreamer's first wife had had a son who was already a big boy. Now when the Dreamer came home, he set one wife on the right, the other on the left of his throne. His little son came with a gold basin, put it down before his father and washed his hands and feet. The Dreamer, pointing to his two wives, spoke to his father-in-law: "Look, that is the Sun and that is the Moon. And he who washes my hands and feet, he is a twinkling star. Who has given you these?"

And the king gave his throne and all his kingdom to the Dreamer, and with his own hands set the crown on the Dreamer's head.

6. THE EARTH WILL HAVE ITS OWN . . .

ONCE upon a time there was a widow who had one son. The boy grew up and saw that everyone around him, except himself, had a father.

"Mother," he asked one day, "why is it that every other boy has a father and I have none?" "Because your father is dead," answered his mother. "And will he never come back?" "No, my child, your father will never come back, but we will go to him. No one can escape death, we too must die and be buried in the earth." "I did not ask God for my life," answered the boy, "and if He has given it to me, why does He take it away again? I will go and look for a place where there is no death."

His mother tried her best to keep him from going forth into the world to look for such a place, but in vain. The boy set out on his wanderings. He wandered over the whole earth, but at every place he came to and asked, "Is there death here?" he received the same answer—"Yes, yes!" And he came to be twenty years old and had not yet found the Land of the Ever-Living.

One day he was walking over a field, when he suddenly saw a stag in front of him, whose great branching horns pierced the clouds and were lost to sight. The youth was pleased with the sight of these great antlers; he went up to the stag and said: "I pray you, in the name of the Creator of the World, tell me, is there a place where there is no death?" "I am God's messenger and fulfil

His will," answered the stag; "I will live until my antlers reach the heavens, but then I must die. If you like, you can stay with me till my death; you shall want for nothing." "No," said the youth, "I will either live for ever, or not at all. Otherwise I could have stayed at home, and not undertaken this pilgrimage." With these words he left the stag and went on his way. Through deserts, steppes and plains, through meadows and woods he wandered till he came at last to an abyss; it seemed to him like Hell, it yawned so bottomless before him. Round about the abyss great rocks reared themselves up into the sky, and on the pinnacle of one of them a raven sat motionless. The youth addressed it and said: "Raven, do you know a land where there is no death?" "I am a messenger of God," answered the raven, "and I will live till I have filled up this abyss. . . . If you like, you can stay with me, you shall want for nothing." But the youth would have none of this, and went on his way. He came to the brink of the sea without meeting anyone else. But he saw something shining in the distance, and as he drew near he saw it was a house built of glass. It had no doors, but on examining it closely he saw a line marked on the glass; he pressed on it and the house opened before him. Within lay a maiden so beautiful that even the sun was jealous of her beauty, and shone more dimly when she crossed the threshold. The youth too was struck by her beauty; he went up to her, and asked her the same question he had asked the stag and the raven. "Such a land does not exist," she said, "but why do you seek it? Stay here with me!" "I did not leave my home," answered the youth, "to find you, but to find the land where there is no death." "Your search is vain," she replied: "the earth will have its own, you will not find

the Land of the Ever-Living. Tell me, if you can, how old am I?" The youth looked at her; her youthful figure and the bloom on her cheeks enchanted him so that he forgot life and death. "You cannot be more than fifteen years old," he said.

"You are mistaken," she replied, "I was made on the first day of the Creation and I am to-day as I was then. I am called Beauty; I will always be as I am now. You could have stayed with me always, but you are not worth immortality, everlasting life would become distasteful to you." But the youth vowed never to do anything against her will, and always to stay beside her.

The years flew by, one after the other; so quickly did they pass that they seemed like seconds. The earth was always changing, but the youth knew nothing of that change, and the maiden remained always the same. A century passed in this way.

Then the youth began to long for his home. He wanted to see his mother, his friends and acquaintances. "I must go home and see my mother and my friends," he said to the maiden. "You will not even find their bones now, so what is the use of going?" she replied. "What nonsense you are talking!" he interrupted; "I only came to you a short time ago; why should they be dead already?" "I told you at the beginning," said the maiden, "that you were not worthy of everlasting life. But do as you wish. Take these three apples with you, and when you get home, eat them."

The youth then left the maiden and journeyed back to his home. On the way he came to the old well-known places; the raven still sat on its rock, but it was dead, and the abyss was filled up. The youth's heart sank within him when he saw that; he wanted to turn back to the maiden, but something drove him

forward. Over rocks and through woods and fields, he came at last to the stag; it still stood there, but it was dead and the heavens supported themselves on its horns. Now for the first time the youth believed that many years had passed since he first travelled that way. But he was still impelled forward to his home. He entered his own village, but met no one he knew. He asked for his mother; no one knew anything about her, only one old couple told him there had once, according to an old tradition, been a woman of that name; but that was a thousand years ago, and her son could not possibly be living now.

No one would believe him, that he really was the son of that woman; they all thought he was a messenger from God. And so they all gathered round him and went on with him. At last he came to the place where his mother's house had stood; there were still ruins there, broken walls covered with moss and overgrown with nettles. And now the past all came back clearly before him; he thought of his mother and his childhood; bitter thoughts rose in his heart. Then he remembered the apples: he ate the first—and suddenly a white beard fell from his chin right over his chest. He ate the second—and his knees gave way, his powers forsook him, he became weak and frail. He felt ashamed of himself. He asked one of the boys round about him if he would be so good as to take the third apple out of his pocket and give it to him. And when he had eaten it, he gave up the ghost.

But the people of the village carried his body away, and buried it in the name of Christ.

7. THE ROSE OF PARADISE

ONCE upon a time there was a peasant who had three daughters. One day when he was going to drive some hay into the town, he asked them what he should bring them. The eldest asked for a dress, such that no one else would have one like it; the second asked for a mirror in which one could see the whole world, and the youngest asked for a Rose of Paradise.

The peasant drove into the town, sold his hay well, got the dress for his eldest and the mirror for his second daughter, but could not, in the whole town, find a Rose of Paradise. The youngest daughter was angry, and asked her father more eagerly than ever to fulfil her wish. What could he do? He had to go back to the town, and on the way he asked everyone he met where he could get such a rose. At last he was told that it grew in the garden of a Div, but that it was very difficult to get into this garden, and whosoever got in could not get out again, and would fall a victim to the Divs.

Was his journey long, or was it short? . . . Who knows? At any rate, he did at last get into the garden and saw a Div there, sleeping under the tree on which the Rose of Paradise bloomed. He stole gently nearer to the tree, plucked the rose, and ran back as fast as his legs could carry him. But in the meantime the Div had wakened, had noticed the disappearance of the rose, and ran after the peasant. He followed him a long way, and had almost caught him when the peasant reached his own house and locked himself in. The Div stood in front of the door and called with such a loud voice that the very leaves on the trees shook: "Give me my Rose of Paradise or your youngest daughter, otherwise

I will destroy your house, and kill you and your family!" The peasant was terrified at this threat, and did not know what he should do. But his youngest daughter said, "It is no use refusing; I will go with the Div. But you must keep the Rose of Paradise." No sooner said than done. The Div took her away to his castle.

The Div had a sister who lived there too, and was called Dsudsu-kokoba (the narrow-chested). The Div said to her one morning, "Little sister, there are guests coming to-day. Kill the Rose of Paradise" (for so he called the peasant's youngest daughter) "and prepare her for dinner."

The sister promised to do as he asked and the Div went away to his work. But the Rose of Paradise had overheard them, and determined to revenge herself cruelly. She took a razor, and when Dsudsu-kokoba came near her, fearing nothing, she fell on her and cut her throat. She cut her up in pieces, boiled her in a cauldron and laid her breast on the top. Then she took a magic mirror, a comb, and a pair of scissors with her and escaped.

When the Div with his troop of guests arrived home and was not welcomed by his sister, he thought she was busy with the dinner, and went to look for her in the kitchen. But he had hardly glanced into the cauldron before he saw with horror that his sister was in it. He guessed at once what had happened, left his guests in the lurch and rushed out in a terrible rage after the Rose of Paradise. He had almost overtaken her, when she threw the magic mirror behind her and at once an immense glass forest grew up out of it. But that could not hinder the Div; he certainly cut himself badly, but he did get through the forest, and hurried on in his pursuit. When the Rose of Paradise saw him again

coming after her, she threw back the comb, and a great forest of combs grew out of the earth. But the Div overcame this hindrance too, though with great difficulty. Then she threw back the scissors and a forest of scissors grew up. The Div emerged from this scissor-forest covered with deep wounds, and although he was weak from loss of blood, yet he did not give up the pursuit. Rose of Paradise thought her end had come, and looked round for some place to hide. Her glance fell on a little house which seemed all shut up. She fell on her knees and prayed fervently to God that He might open the doors of the house. At once they sprang open, and hardly was the Rose of Paradise within than they shut of themselves. Then the Div arrived outside the house, but though he tried every way to get inside, all his efforts were in vain. At last he gave it up and went back to his castle.

But the Rose of Paradise examined her refuge and found a coffin in one corner, in which lay the body of a handsome youth, the son of the king of that country. He had one day shot at the sun, and from that time had been dead during the day, though he came to life again every night. His father had built the little house for him, and had put the coffin with his dead-alive son into it. Every evening the prince came alive, left his coffin, ate the food that had been brought him, and in the morning laid himself again in his coffin. And every morning Paradise-Rose ate some of the food he had left over the night before, but she never allowed the prince to see her. He began to wonder how the little house was kept so clean and tidy. And one night he took a candle and looked through the whole house till at last he discovered the maiden. He asked her who she was and how she had come there, and she told him all

that had happened to her. The prince fell in love with her and they lived together as man and wife. And so days, weeks and months went by, till the time came when Paradise-Rose was about to have a child. Then the prince gave her a ring and said: "Go with this ring to my father's court. You will meet wild dogs who will spring on you with furious barking, show them my ring and they will leave you alone. Then ask for lodging for the night; your child will be born, then I will come and see you."

Paradise-Rose said good-bye to the prince and set out on her journey. Was her journey long, or was it short? At any rate she arrived at last at the king's court, where the dogs rushed at her, barking furiously, but were at once silenced when she showed them the ring. The king, who had watched all this, was surprised and asked his courtiers who the woman was. But no one knew her; they only knew that she had asked lodging for the night. The king commanded that she should be given a room, and in the night her son was born. When the king was informed of this in the morning, he went with the queen to see the baby. They were delighted with it, for it was a beautiful child, but what astonished them was that the infant was so like their own dear son. The queen was so deeply moved that she began to weep. The king sent a maid to wait on the mother, and then he and the queen returned to their own apartments.

In the meantime the prince had wakened up again. He went straight to the house where Paradise-Rose was.

"Paradise-Rose!" he called in at the window.

"What is it, dearest?" she answered, for she had recognised his voice at once.

"What has God given us? A son or a daughter?"

"A son."

"What are you lying on?"

"A dirty old mattress."

"With what are you covered?"

"With an old coverlet."

"What have you under your head?"

"A cold stone."

"Where is our son lying?"

"In an old cradle."

"Alas for my mother! Alas for my father! but most of all for my old nurse," said the prince, and went back again to his little house.

The next morning the nurse, who had heard all this, related it all to the king. He thought she was deceiving him and sent her away. Then he called his vizier and commanded him to watch the house where the mother lay, and to tell him if anything happened. And this night everything happened just as on the night before. The vizier told the king everything and convinced him that the waiting-woman had spoken the truth. Now the king gave orders that the mother should be lodged for the third night in a bed of silk, and that the child should be put in a golden cradle. But he said to the mother: "I and some of my courtiers will hide myself in the room next door. If the prince comes, say to him that his son has taken ill and beg him to come in. We will then overpower him and cure him of his spell."

When it was dark the prince came.

"Paradise-Rose!" he called.

What is it, dearest?" she answered.

"What are you lying on?"

"On a new silken mattress!"

"With what are you covered?"

"With a new coverlet of silk!"

"What have you under your head?"

"A new pillow of silk and a silken bolster!"

"Where is our little son lying?"

"In a golden cradle!"

"Blessings on my mother! Blessings on my father! but most of all, blessings on my old nurse!"

"Yes, everything would be delightful—but the little one is ill—will you not come in and look at him?"

"Is there no one awake in the house? Are they all sleeping?"

"Do not fear. Come in. Everyone is asleep."

The prince came in, but he had hardly entered the room before he was seized. The joy of the king and queen knew no bounds when they saw their son alive before them. But as the dawn came in, he died. And with him died also the joy in the king's house. Grief and care stole in again and settled down. No doctor, no faith-healer, no wise man could help. No one could waken the dead prince.

But then the queen remembered her sister was married to the sun, and determined to seek her at once and ask her advice. Whether she had far to go or not, who knows? But she came at length to a kingdom where she was received by the king as befitted her high rank and where she was told that the queen lay in difficult childbirth. When the king heard that she was on her way to the kingdom of the sun, he asked her to tell the sun of his wife's illness and bring his advice on her way back.

As she went further on her way the queen saw a man standing in a red-hot oven. And this unfortunate also asked her to tell the sun of his sufferings, and give him the sun's advice on her return. She went on again, and saw a stag whose horns were locked in the heavens and

who could not get them free. When the stag heard where she was going, it said, "Oh, mighty queen, for one and a half years I have stood here suffering like this! Have pity on me. Tell the sun of my misfortunes and ask how I can help myself. When you come back, bring me his answer. I will do you a service in return: if you want a ladder to get up to heaven, my antlers will help you."

The queen gladly took advantage of this offer. She climbed up on the antlers of the stag and soon arrived at the castle of the sun. He was not at home at that moment, for he was out hunting. But the queen was received by her sister and their joy was boundless. At last the wife of the sun said, "It is well that you came when my husband was out, for he would have eaten you up at once. But you are not yet out of danger. If he sees you when he comes home, he will still eat you. So I must hide you." And she locked her sister into a room with nine locks.

Shortly afterwards the sun came home from the hunt. He had hardly crossed the threshold when he cried:

"I smell the flesh of a Christian! Where is it?"

"How should there be a Christian here?" answered his wife. "You have, perhaps, been hunting through Christian lands."

"No, no! I smell and I feel that there is a Christian here in my house. Do not lie, tell the truth."

Then she owned up and added: "Yes, there is a Christian in the house, but it is my sister. If you promise me to do her no harm, I will show her to you."

The sun promised, and his wife brought her sister in. She told the sun of her anxieties and asked for his advice. And she did not forget the suffering queen, the man in the red-hot oven, or the stag.

"Do not fear, dear sister-in-law. I will help you and

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those for whom you ask. In the meantime, you must be our guest."

The next morning the sun bathed himself with water, and when he had finished he gave some of it to his sister-in-law, saying: "Bathe your son in this water, and he will be cured at once. The suffering queen must lay herself on ordinary straw, and her child will be born easily. The man in the oven must come out of the oven, and he will at once be rid of his trouble. The stag must bend its head slightly towards the earth, and its antlers will be freed."

Then the queen set out for home to cure her son. On the way she gave the sun's advice to the stag, the suffering queen, and the man in the oven, and all three were cured of their distresses. Her son too was cured; after he had bathed in the water the sun had washed in, he died no more.

Shortly afterwards he married Paradise-Rose and ascended his father's throne. And the whole royal family lived happily ever after.

And so long as I do not cook millet in a thimble, stir it with a needle, dish it out with my finger nail, so long will those who have listened to this fairy-tale have no headache.

8. THE COCK AND HEN NIGHTINGALE

THERE was, and there was not—there is no one better than God.—There was once a king who had three sons. When he was growing old he called them together, for he wanted to know to which of them he should leave his kingdom. He turned first to the eldest and asked him: "My son, can you build me a church in which no one can find a single fault?" The son thought over the idea,

and said: "No, father, that I cannot do." Then the second son was asked the same question, and gave the same answer. He was dismissed, and the youngest was brought forward and asked: "My son, can you build me such a church that no one in the world can find a fault in it?" The youngest thought over it for a few minutes and then said: "Yes, father, I can do that."

He then summoned all the most eminent master-builders of the kingdom, and the building began. When it was finished, the king gathered his people and his army together, commanded them to examine and test the church, and tell him if they found any faults. But no one found any faults. And the king was just about to enter the church himself and hold a service for the worship of God, when an old man passed by, looked at the church and said: "Ah, what a beautiful church you have built there, it is only a pity that the foundations are crooked." The king heard this, stopped the old man and commanded him to repeat what he had just said. "Oh, I said nothing special," answered the old man, "only that it would be a beautiful church if only the foundations were not crooked." When the king's son heard that, he sent for the masons and had the church pulled down. But then he built another and a finer one, called his father again, who came with his people and his army to test the building. And again no one could find any fault, and the king was just about to enter, when again an old man passed by and said: "The church is beautiful, but the tower is crooked!"

The king heard the remark, stopped the old man and said: "Let me hear again what you have just said." The old man repeated what he had said and went on his way. Again the king's son called his workmen, and they built a new and still more beautiful church. When it

was finished, the king gathered his people and his army together and ordered them to examine the church, but again no fault could be found. The king was just about to enter it when the same old man passed by and said: "The church is beautiful, but it lacks a cock and a hen nightingale." The king heard the voice, stopped the old man and asked: "What did you say, old man? Repeat it." The old man told the king what he had said, and went on his way. But the king turned back and did not enter the church.

Then the king's son was very sorrowful and resolved to leave the country. His father gave him a three-legged horse and let him go. The son put on his armour, mounted his horse, and set out on his journey. But he travelled slowly; the horse only crawled along; it had, of course, only three legs. The king's son began to weep, but at last he arrived at a meadow where an old, old man had been sent to water the Indian corn, and who had bent himself double in his exertions till he could put his foot on his beard—but all in vain. He could get no water. When the old man saw the weeping horseman he said, "Why do you weep, my son?" The king's son told him all that had passed and what he now intended to do. "Do not be so sorrowful," said the old man; "do not think your three-legged horse so useless. Tell him only that you need him badly, and he will know what to do. He will carry you from here to the other side of the sea. There he will bring you to a maiden who has a cock and a hen nightingale. If you do not carry off the maiden, then you cannot carry off the birds. Leave everything to the horse. Take care to hide yourself well, that the maiden does not see you, otherwise she will change you to dust and wind. But when she lies down to sleep, she unbinds her golden hair and it

hangs from the sky right down to the earth. Then go in, twist her hair round your arm, and however loudly she may cry 'I am burning!' do not leave go, only take a firmer hold. She will implore you by things of a thousand different sorts, by heaven, by earth, by the whole world—do not believe her. Only when she swears by the cock and the hen nightingale that she will follow you as your wife, let her free. But you must take great care, the bald-headed lute-player has been sitting on a cloud these four years watching her; he would like to carry her off, but cannot manage it. So whenever she swears by the cock and the hen nightingale, make haste and climb up to her."

The king's son bade farewell to the old man and whispered to his horse: "I need you sorely." It flew like the wind, over the sea and on to dry land. From there the youth soon came into the neighbourhood of the maiden with the golden locks. He lay in wait for her, and when she unbound her hair he stole in and wound it round his arm. "I am burning!" she cried, but he only twisted it the more tightly. "What do you want me to do?" she asked him. "I want you to marry me." "Very well, I agree." "No, that is not enough for me," answered the king's son: "you must swear it." She swore it. "No," he said again, "you must swear by the cock and the hen nightingale." But that she would not do. He twisted her hair more and more tightly round his arm. "I am burning!" cried the maiden again. He only held on the more. She swore by the whole world, by the heaven, by the sun, to marry him, but he would not listen and pulled her hair tighter and tighter as he wound it round his arm. Finally she swore by the cock and hen nightingale. Then he let her loose and climbed up beside her. "I have sworn to marry you," said the

maiden, "but I will not do so until I have found out a certain thing. I have a three-legged horse, I will put it with yours. If they fight, I will not be your wife. But if they do not fight, I am yours." The king's son agreed to this and the two horses were let loose together. The creatures whinnied, ran to each other, stood together and rubbed their necks against each other. For they were mother and son, and that being so, why should they fight?

Then the king's son and the maiden set out on their journey. And they took the cock and hen nightingale with them. But as they travelled the beardless lute-player saw them, came up to them, seized the maiden, disappeared with her into the earth and then flew up again towards heaven. The king's son was very sorrowful. "Go and bring a long rope," he said to his servants. They did so. The king's son had himself bound and ordered them to leave him at the spot where the maiden had disappeared. They did that; he unbound himself and went on and on till he came to a meadow. Three three-legged horses were grazing on this meadow, one black, one red, and one white. They grazed for a time and then began to play. But this was what these horses did: when anyone mounted the black horse, he reared and knocked his rider against the rocks till he was dead, for the black horse was the messenger of death. If anyone mounted the red horse he was carried down into the earth, but whosoever mounted the white horse was carried up to the heavens, for the white horse was the messenger of light. The king's son tried to catch the black horse, but could not. Neither could he catch the white horse. But at last he succeeded in catching the red horse; he mounted it and began to ride down, down. He rode for a long time and at last

arrived at a kingdom. He rode through it—for how long nobody knows—but finally came to a town. He suffered terrible thirst on the way. In the town he rode up to an old woman and asked for a drink of water. She said: "Youth, willingly would I give you water, but we have none. A dragon sits beside the well; every day he eats a maiden, and he gives us water only by drops. To-day it is the turn of the king's daughter." "Mother," said the king's son, "give me a pitcher. I will bring you water."

"No, good youth, no! The dragon will devour you!" But the youth paid no attention to her; he tore a water-pot out of the earth¹ and went on his way. As he went he met a maiden; she stood there dressed entirely in black, her hands crossed on her breast, weeping bitterly. "Sister," said the king's son, "do not weep! You do not need to let yourself be eaten by the dragon." "Leave me," implored the maiden, "leave me, or the dragon will come and devour us both." "No, I will not leave you; but I must sleep for a little just now, for I am tired. If the dragon comes, waken me." He lay down, went to sleep, and all at once a dragon came flying up. The maiden started, tried to waken the youth, who slept so soundly, however, that she could not rouse him. But three tears from her eyes fell on his cheeks; they burnt him so that he wakened at once. He sprang up, strung his bow and shot an arrow into the dragon, now in full flight. Then he hewed him down with his sword. One side of the dragon was swollen like a mountain, the blood poured out of the other side in torrents. The news spread quickly in the town: "The dragon is dead! The dragon is dead!" Man and beast crowded to the water, more and more followed after. The people, half-dead

¹ Great pots sunk into the earth are used in the Caucasus for storing both wine and water.

with thirst, drank so much that some died at the well, some on the way back, and some in their own homes. The king's daughter too went back to her home. How overjoyed her father was! And then he wanted to know who had saved his daughter. She searched among the crowd for her deliverer, searched and searched, but could find no trace of him. "Father," she said, "he is not here." Then the king sent out messengers to search for him; at last they found him and brought him to the king. But on his way the youth had caught a hare, which he thrust into his breast-pocket. As he waited among the messengers, the king's daughter wanted to go and sit beside him, but he showed her the ears of the hare sticking out of his pocket, and she was frightened. Her father asked her if she had not yet found her deliverer. "Yes," she answered, "but he has something in his breast-pocket that frightens me." "Never mind it," said the king, "shut your eyes and go and sit beside him." She did as he said and went and sat by the youth. The king had him conducted with every honour into the palace, but the youth did not marry her. Then the king asked him what he really wanted.

"Nothing except to go home," he replied. "Try and send me somehow back to my own home!" "I cannot do that," answered the king, "but I will do all that is possible to me. I know a place where a falcon has her nest. But an eagle gives her no peace: he devours all the falcon's young." The king's son took his bow and arrows and went to the falcon's nest. Suddenly the eagle swooped down, meaning to devour the falcon's young, but the king's son shot an arrow right into its heart. The young falcons took him into their nest and fondled him, and he went to sleep among them. When the mother falcon came home and saw a human being

lying in her nest, she had already opened her beak to kill him, because she thought he was the being who always robbed her of her young. But when she heard what had happened, she let herself hover over the sleeping youth and sheltered him first with the one wing, and then with the other. When the king's son awoke, she asked him how she could thank him for saving her young. "Take me to my home," he answered, "I ask nothing else from you." "Good!" the mother falcon replied, "take four of the king's buffaloes, get up on my back and I will take you to your home." The king's son did as she bade him; he fetched the four buffaloes, cut them in pieces, loaded them on the falcon's back, got up himself, and away flew the falcon. And as often as the falcon turned back her head, so often did the king's son give her a piece of buffalo meat. But when the falcon turned round for the last time there was no more meat left, and when the falcon could get nothing more to eat, it seemed as if they must both fall to the ground. Then the king's son cut a piece of flesh from his own body and gave it to the falcon. When they came to earth, the king's son began to limp. "What was that you gave me to eat the last time?" asked the falcon. "A piece of flesh from my own body," he answered. "Look! this was where I cut it out." The falcon pulled out one of its feathers, stroked the wound with it, and it became whole. Then the king's son began to search for the maiden, the cock and hen nightingale. Did he search long? Who knows? He came at last to the place to which the beardless lute-player had brought the maiden. "Where is the beardless one?" he asked her. "He has been asleep for three years," she answered weeping. "When he had carried me away from you he fell asleep. He has still three days to sleep." "How can one kill him?" asked

the king's son. "There is a cage behind nine locks," she answered; "in that cage are three birds. These birds are his soul, his spirit and his strength. Whoever will kill him must kill these three." The king's son opened the locks, got into where the birds were, tore off their heads and threw them away. And at that same moment the beardless lute-player died. Then the king's son took the maiden, the cock and hen nightingale, and set out for his father's house. His father was overjoyed, blessed his son, put the crown on his head, gave him the maiden to wife and held a great wedding feast. Everyone was happy and we are happy with them. And now the life of your enemy also is at an end.

Sorrow there, joy here,
Bran there, meal here.

9. THE CHILDREN WITH THE GOLDEN LOCKS

ONCE upon a time—nothing is greater than God—once upon a time there was a man who had three daughters. Their mother had died, and now they had a wicked step-mother. They were an eyesore to her, and one day when she was very angry she said to her husband: "If you drive your three daughters away, I will stay with you; if not, then I will die." He was very sorrowful; how could he drive his children away? He thought and thought, till he thought of a plan. "Children," he said, "I know a place where there is an apple tree; we will go and shake it and you will gather up the apples." They went to the place and took a sheet with them. Now there was under the apple tree a great deep hole; the father spread out the sheet to cover this and spread leaves all over it. He himself climbed up the tree and

said to his daughters: "I will shake the tree and you will gather the apples." The girls wanted to obey their father's orders, but as soon as they trod on the sheet, they fell like the apples, one after the other, into the deep hole. They began to weep, but their father left them and went home. When they began to feel hungry, the eldest said, "Come, sisters, eat me!" "No, eat me," said the second. But the youngest prayed to God, and implored Him to change one of her hands into a pickaxe, and the other into a spade. God heard her prayer, and at once she had a pickaxe and a spade instead of her two hands. She began to dig and cut and soon made a way out of the hole. Then she walked and walked till she came to a kingdom where she hid herself in the king's stable. In that stable the horses were fed on almonds and raisins. So whenever food was brought to the horses, she went and took some of it, ate some herself, and took the rest to her sisters.

But the horses became gradually thinner and thinner, because of the food they did not get. The king was informed and he sent a groom who was told to keep watch in the stable to see what was going on there. The groom hid himself, and when the maiden came and filled her apron with almonds and raisins he rushed out, seized her, and commanded her to follow him to the king. "I will fetch my sisters too," she said, "then we can go together to the king." The groom agreed and let her go. She came back presently with her sisters, and the groom led them all three into the king's presence. He first asked the eldest what she could do. "I can weave you such a carpet that your whole kingdom can be put down on it—and even more," she answered. Then he addressed the same question to the second sister. "I can cook you such a dinner in an egg-shell that all the

people of your kingdom can eat their fill and still not finish it," she replied.

"And you, what can you do?" the king asked the youngest daughter. "I can bear you a boy and a girl with golden locks," she answered. Then the king married her and made the other sisters ladies of the court.

Time went on, and the youngest sister really had a boy and a girl with golden hair. Her sisters were jealous of her, and made a wicked plan with the nurse to exchange the children for puppies. They threw the boy and girl into the mill-stream and then told the king that his wife had brought puppies into the world. The king was very angry and ordered his servants to chain the mother to the great gate. Whosoever passed by was to spit in her face and throw soot over her. That was done: she was bound to the gates of the palace; everyone who passed by spat at her and strewed soot on her bosom.

But the miller had no children. He heard crying behind the mill one day, went out, and found two little children—a boy and a girl. "I will take them home," he said; "I will adopt them and bring them up." So saying, he pulled the little creatures out of the water and carried them into the house. As other children grow in years, so these children grew in days, and the miller built a little house for them. Now, when the king held a great feast one day, to which he asked all the matrons and maidens of his kingdom, the miller's two children came with the others. And when they saw that everyone who passed their mother spat on her and threw soot on her bosom, the two golden-haired children went up to her, held roses to her face, wiped the soot off her breast and kissed her. Then they went into the king's rooms, sat down at table and told everyone that the woman who was bound to the gate was their mother,

and that the king was their father. But the king absolutely refused to believe it. Now there was on the table a roasted pheasant, and beside it a branch of a dried vine. The boy took this in his hand and said: "If the woman who is bound to the great gate is my mother, and if the king is my father, then this branch of vine shall again have sap in it, it will send out roots and produce grapes." Then he took the pheasant and said, "If that woman is my mother and the king is my father, then this pheasant will become alive, it will perch on the vine and spread its wings." And so it came to pass: the vine became green and produced a bunch of grapes; the pheasant became alive, flew to the vine and spread its wings. Then the king embraced his children and kissed them. Their mother was set free, her face was washed, she was dressed in queenly robes, and received the rightful honour due to her. The two wicked sisters were bound to the tails of wild horses and torn to pieces.

Sorrow there, joy here,
Bran there, meal here,
I left my saddle in Mzcheth,
The beautiful town on the Aragwa.
May God give to everyone the victory
Who sits here.

10. THE STORY OF THE PIG

THERE was, and there was not—who is greater than God?—There was once upon a time a poor, childless couple who possessed a pig. But it was a pig of this kind: it opened its mouth, took the pitcher, went to the well, filled the pitcher and brought it home. It swept the floor, washed the dishes, and knew everything there was to know about housekeeping. One day the pig took

the washing, and went into a dark wood. A king's son, who happened to be hunting through that wood, saw how, when the pig came to the water, its pig's skin fell off and disclosed such a beautiful maiden that the brightness of her beauty shone over all the mountains. The king's son did not let her out of his sight, but looked deep into her lovely bright eyes.

But the maiden washed her washing, pulled on her pig's skin again and waddled home. The king's son followed the pig, went into the little house where it lived, and asked the man he found there if he might spend the night there. "We are not worthy that you should spend the night under our roof," said the man, "we have nothing to eat, nothing to drink, and no bed fit for you. We are only poor peasants." "That does not matter," replied the king's son, "do not trouble yourselves about that: my bed and my supper will be sufficient for me." And he did stay the night there; he hoped to see the pig again, but the old man pressed him to go to bed. Next morning the king's son offered the peasant ten pieces of gold for his pig, but in vain. "The pig is our bread-winner," said the peasant, "what shall we do if we give it away?" Then the king's son offered twenty pieces of gold, put the pig in his saddle-bag and went on his way. When he arrived at his own home, he told his father he wanted to marry the pig. His father was very angry. "What do you mean?" he said; "to marry a pig! Why do you want to cover yourself and your family with shame?" "Father," said the son, "my whole happiness depends on it! What shall I do?" The king answered nothing, but the marriage did take place. An old room was set aside for the bridal couple, "It is good enough for such a pair," said the king.

The king's son led the pig into the room, and then said, "Now, take off your pig's skin!" The pig did so, and such a beautiful maid appeared that even the sun was put to shame by her. And then they threw themselves into each other's arms.

All this had been observed by the ministers the king had sent after the young couple, with orders to watch what they did. They ran at once to the king and told him what they had seen. Then the king's son took his wife and presented her to his father. He was overjoyed, blessed them both and put crowns on their heads.

But the vizier had become very jealous of the king's son. "He brought home a little pig," he said to himself, "the only pig the peasant possessed, and it became a maid, so beautiful that her like has never been seen before. I will choose the biggest pig of all the herds and buy it!" And he did so: he went to all the swineherds, chose the largest pig and bought it. Then he tied it on to his horse; but the pig squealed as loud as it could, sprang off the horse and ran back to its herd. But the vizier pursued it and brought it, with much struggling and squealing, back to his house. Then he dragged it to the church, that they might be married. The pig struggled furiously, it upset the candles, and rushed about between the legs of the priest, the bridegroom and the guests. But finally it was caught and the marriage ceremony was performed. The vizier took his bride into the bride-chamber, kissed her on the neck, and said, "Please, please, now become a maiden! What are you waiting for?" But the bride only became wilder and more enraged. He kissed her again on the neck; but the pig seized him by the throat with her teeth, and bit it through. Then the pig went back to

its herd and the vizier was carried to the graveyard. So ended the marriage between the vizier and the pig.

Sorrow there, joy here,
Bran there, flour here.

II. THE BALD-HEADED GOOSEHERD

THERE was, and there was not—no one is kinder than God.—There was once upon a time a peasant. He was already weak and old, and he had no children. He and his wife often lamented their childlessness, and bewailed it before God, for they were not aware of any sin they had committed against God or man. They distressed themselves greatly thinking about this. At last they made up their minds to seek some remedy against their childlessness. The peasant clothed himself in iron, put on an iron hat, iron boots, took an iron stick in his hand, and went to a fortune-teller. He knew no remedy for childlessness himself, but told the peasant that behind the nine mountains there lived a black Div, he was a good fortune-teller, and he should ask him for a remedy. And so the peasant set out again. Was it a long journey or a short one? Who knows? At any rate, he climbed over the nine mountains and came to the land of the black Div. When the Div saw a human being in his country, he cried out in a threatening voice: "No bird dares to fly above my kingdom, no ant dares to crawl in the dust of my kingdom: what kind of a being are you, that you dare to come here?"

"I am a poor peasant," he replied, "and have no evil intentions. I only want to ask you about something. The fortune-teller So-and-so sent me to you, that is why I am here."

"If that is so," said the Div, "then you must have

some sign by which I can know whether you speak the truth."

The peasant had a sign which he showed to the Div; it was in fact a ring, and the fortune-teller had told him he had only to show this ring to the Div and he would be made welcome. And so it was: the Div at once became more friendly, gave him food and drink, but told him also that he did not possess the desired medicine, that behind another nine mountains there lived a red Div who knew the remedy for childlessness. "I will give you a sign to take with you," he added. The peasant set out again. He travelled for a long time, climbed over nine mountains and came to the territory of the red Div. He began to rage even more furiously than the black Div had done when he saw a human being. "What kind of a being are you? No bird dares to fly through the air above me, no ant dares to crawl on my earth! And you come here!"

"The black Div sent me to you," said the peasant. "I have no evil intentions. I am a poor man, I have no children, and I have not come to you without a sign by which you can know that I speak the truth. You shall teach me how I may get children." When the red Div saw the sign of the black Div, he became more friendly, but he did not know the desired remedy, and sent the peasant to the white Div. He lived behind another nine mountains. The peasant took a sign from the red Div also and set out on his journey. He climbed over nine mountains for the third time and came into the kingdom of the white Div. He was even more enraged than the black and the red Divs had been, and threatened the peasant in a fearsome way. But when he saw the sign of the red Div, he became more friendly and said: "Yes! I know the remedy and will give it to you. But

half of everything you get must belong to me." The peasant thought this over, and said to himself, "Half a span of oxen" (that is one ox) "is better than none: one child is better than none." And he added aloud, "Good, I agree to that." The Div gave him two apples and said, "You and your wife must divide and eat one of these apples; give the other to your mare and your dog. Your wife will bear two sons, your mare two foals, and your dog two puppies. And at such and such a time you must come back and bring me one son, one foal, and one puppy." The peasant took the apples joyfully and set out on his homeward journey.

When he got home he cut one apple in two, gave one half to his wife and ate the other half himself. Then he cut the other apple, and gave one half to his mare and the other half to his dog. And in due time his wife gave birth to two golden-haired boys. The mare had two foals with golden manes and fiery hoofs. But the dog had two panther-cubs; they too had golden manes and fiery teeth. Of the two boys one was called Sachwatho,¹ the other Thavisi. As other boys grew in years, these boys grew as much in days. Time went on and all the young creatures grew quickly, the boys, the foals, and the panther-cubs. Gradually the day drew near on which the Div was to come and fetch the half which had been promised him. The peasant felt his heart grow heavy, he wept bitterly and put on mourning garments. When Sachwatho noticed this, he went to his mother and said: "Mother, it is a long time since you laid me on your breast and gave me suck. I should like it again."

"Come, my son," said his mother, "how could I refuse you?" Sachwatho seized her breast with his teeth and said: "Now tell me true, why is our father always so

¹ Written Sasxwatho, but pronounced Sachwatho.

sad and why does he weep? If you do not tell me I will bite you!"

"My son," answered his mother, "he has ground for his sorrow."

But Sachwatho did not leave go till his mother had told him everything. Then he laughed out loud, went to his father and said: "Father, why do you sit there and grieve? We are both still alive and there is no need to weep for us. We run about hither and thither, only the stay-at-home is sad. Listen, we will work it this way with the Div: we will pretend that nothing is wrong. Do not be afraid, I will go with him and do what is necessary." The father was so cheered by these words that he left the corner in which he had sat and wept, took off his mourning garments and became cheerful again.

Then the Div came. "Well, now we will divide," he said. "Very good!" said the old man. The Div chose Sachwatho, a foal and a panther-cub and went away. Whether the journey was long or short, they came at last to the kingdom of the Div. They passed through villages and towns, and everywhere they went the people stood still and looked at Sachwatho. When they came to the place where the Div lived, he pointed out his house to Sachwatho. "Go on ahead," he said, "I have something to do near by; I will follow you in a short time." On the way Sachwatho met an old woman who wept and wept till she nearly wept the eyes out of her head. "Why do you weep, old lady?" asked Sachwatho. "Woe unto you and your mother!" answered the old woman. "Why did your mother not die before you? The Div has gone to fetch people of his own faith and priests of his faith. They will kill you and the foal and the panther-cub, and eat you up! Run away before he comes

back, perhaps you can still save yourself." Sachwatho mounted his horse with the hoofs of fire, took his panther and flew away. In a moment he was behind nine mountains and again behind other nine mountains. When the Div got back to his house, he asked his wife, "Well, have you prepared that youth for supper?" "That youth? What youth? There has been no one here!" she answered. "Aha! perhaps he has escaped," thought the Div; "what I saw just now behind the ninth mountain, the size of a basket, that will be he!" He sprang at once on to his horse, struck him a blow and galloped away. But Sachwatho had hastened on, had travelled over mountains and more mountains till he came to the ocean. There he went up and down the shore, weeping, for there was no hope of deliverance: the sea in front of him, the Div behind him. But all of a sudden his horse said: "Why do you weep, master? Why are you sad? Grip me by the saddle-girth, strike me a good blow, and we will be free of them all!" Sachwatho sprang off his horse, seized the saddle-girth, but at that moment the Div arrived and bellowed: "Well, so you are there, you worm! You will not escape me again! You are just one bite for me!" Sachwatho gave his horse such a blow that it reared, sprang into the sea and swam over. Sachwatho offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God when he saw that he was saved; when he looked round he saw the Div standing on the other shore grinding his teeth and cursing him. Sachwatho loosed his horse, led it to a meadow, rested a while, and then mounted again to continue his journey.

Did he ride far or not, who knows? But at last he came to a kingdom. On the way he met a swineherd, whom he asked if there was any news in that country. He told him that the chief town lay quite near, that

the king was rich and mighty, and had three beautiful daughters. Now Sachwatho had two golden robes with him, and so he said to the swineherd: "Listen! I will give you this golden robe if you give me your garments and the bladder of a pig." The herd was delighted at this good exchange, gave him his clothes, killed a pig, gave Sachwatho some of the meat to eat, took out the bladder, cleaned it and washed it, and handed it to Sachwatho. He said farewell to the swineherd, put on his ragged clothing, plaited up his golden hair and covered it with the pig's bladder. The other golden robe, his armour and his finery he hung on his horse and let it and the panther go free. His horse pulled out one of the hairs of its tail, gave it to its master and said: "If you need us, take this hair, call me by name, and the panther and I will come at once." Sachwatho took the hair, said farewell to the two beasts, and went off towards the town. When he arrived there, he made inquiries if no one needed a gooseherd. He was told that the king would be able to give him work. No one had any idea then what a gallant youth Sachwatho was: everyone thought him merely a bald-headed clown. But the king did make him his gooseherd. So Sachwatho drove the geese to the river, pulled out his flute and played to his flock as they went into the river to swim. One day the geese began to dance in the water, to dive and play about, and Sachwatho thought he would like to bathe too. He got up, looked carefully all round to see that no one was near, took off his clothes, pulled the pig's bladder off his head, and sprang into the water. Now it so chanced that the king's youngest daughter was sitting at the window looking out. And she saw something bright and shining, and as she looked more carefully she saw it was Sachwatho's golden locks floating on the

river like golden waves. Her heart grew heavy and she fell into a state of melancholy. Everyone tried to find out what was the matter with her, but she was dumb and refused to speak a word. She had fallen so deeply in love with the gooseherd that she nearly died.

At last she could bear it no longer, and said to her sisters: "Listen! what a long time it is since we gave our father anything! It is surely time that we did so again." "Very good," said the sisters, "we will do so." And each of them brought their father a gift; the elder sisters brought rich garments and weapons, but the youngest plucked three gherkins, one of which was rotten, one over-ripe, and one fresh, and gave them to her father. The king was much astonished: "I have been king for many years," he thought to himself, "but no one has ever given me such a present as this. What did she mean by these three gherkins? I had better ask her." He called his youngest daughter and asked her what was the meaning of these three gherkins. "It is shameful of me to speak like this," she replied, "but I will tell you. The rotten gherkin is my eldest sister—her time is already past. The over-ripe gherkin is my second sister, and this fresh one—is myself. We want to marry, we want husbands." "Well, children," said the king, "if you want to marry, why not? I have no one but you, what is the use of my kingdom and all my riches to me?" And he sent messengers through all his kingdom to let the people know that he had three daughters and was looking for three sons-in-law.

And the suitors all came, till the whole town was full. The king brought forward his daughters, and it was arranged that they should go and sit on the knee of whichever wooer pleased them most. The eldest daughter went first up and down the rows of suitors, and finally

sat down on the knee of the vizier; the second daughter chose the high steward. Now it was the turn of the youngest daughter. She ran up and down, and looked and looked, but could not find him whom she sought. "He is not there!" she said to her father. "Well, who is missing, then?" he asked her. "Everyone is here except the bald-headed gooseherd." The people thought there was no good fetching him, the king's daughter would never think of marrying him! But the king did not agree with that, and sent for him. On the way to the palace, Sachwatho caught a hare and put it in his breast-pocket. When he arrived, the youngest daughter went up and down the rows again, and when she stopped before the gooseherd, she would have sat down on his knee, but Sachwatho let the hare's ears stick out of his breast-pocket. She was frightened, and did not venture to sit on his knee. "Child!" said the king, "shut your eyes and sit down." And so she did. She went back to Sachwatho, shut her eyes and sat down on his knee. The king was not pleased with the affair, but what could he do? The people were struck dumb with astonishment. The king gave the vizier and his wife, and the high steward and his wife, gold and riches of all kinds and established them in splendid houses. But the youngest with her gooseherd only got a hen-house. There they lived and put up with all their discomforts and the other sons-in-law laughed at them. But as time went on, the youngest daughter began to wonder whether her golden-haired husband was not really a bald-head after all? And when she began to have this doubt she often wept. But the bald-headed gooseherd did not vex himself about that, nor about what the people were saying.

And so time went on. But the king began to think.

"Now I have married my daughters," he said to himself, "but I am growing old and have no son. I will test my sons-in-law to see to which of them I should leave my kingdom." And he called the vizier and the high steward to him and said: "I will soon die, but first you shall show me what you can do. Get me a cure!" "What is wrong with you, then?" they asked. "What shall we bring you?"

"You must go to such and such a place," said the king, "and there capture a living hind. Take her calf, cut out its liver and bring it to me, that will cure me. There is no other remedy." The vizier and the high steward made great preparations, mounted their horses and set out on their journey. But the gooseherd got a lame old nag, mounted it and limped away. The others laughed at him and said sarcastically that with such a mare he would be sure to get the desired remedy.

But the bald-headed herd rode calmly out of the town. Then he pulled out his horse's hair, and at once his good horse came to him. He took off his rags and clothed himself in his golden garments. Then he rode on till he reached the place the king had mentioned. His horse took him to a herd of stags, Sachwatho caught a mother-hind fastened it up and sat down beside it. In due time the vizier and the high steward arrived, greeted him, and began to speak to him with deep respect. "Why have you taken all this trouble?" asked Sachwatho; "what do you want here?" "Our king is ill," they answered together, "and we are to take the calf of a hind and cut out its liver for the king. We will give you whatever you ask, if you will get that for us." "I ask nothing but the tips of your little fingers," said Sachwatho. And what did they do? They cut off the tips of their little fingers, gave them to Sachwatho, thanked him,

said farewell, and rode away. As soon as they were gone, he mounted his horse and rode off. When he came near the town, he dismounted, took off his glittering garments, put on his rags again, pulled the pig's bladder over his head, let his horse go, mounted his lame old nag, and when his two brothers-in-law rode into the town, he ambled after them as the bald-headed gooseherd. Again they both laughed heartily at him. "Of course you have the liver," they jeered, "while we come with empty hands!" They went on laughing at him as they rode on to take the king what they had brought. He ate the liver, but it made him no better. And the wife of the bald-head sat there and wept.

Later on the king sent his sons-in-law for another remedy. "If you wish me to get better," he said, "know that at such and such a place there is a herd of panthers; you must milk one of the mother panthers and bring me the milk. That is the only thing that can do me any good now."

The two rich sons-in-law started out as before; the gooseherd again saddled a lame old horse and limped away. But as soon as he got out of the town he pulled out his horse-hair, and at once his own horse was beside him. "The king is ill," he said to it, "and has sent the vizier and the high steward to fetch panther-milk. Now you know what you have to do!"

"Do not trouble yourself!" said the horse, "leave it all to me! Mount!"

But they took the panther-cub with the teeth of fire with them and made straight for the place where the panthers lived. When they got there panthers sprang at them from all sides, and blocked their way. But he of the fiery teeth chose a panther-mother out of the pack and brought her to Sachwatho. He tied it up and sat

down beside it. Shortly afterwards his two brothers-in-law arrived, and saw the same horseman with the golden garments sitting there. They wondered a good deal about him, and thought it must be the king of the beasts they had to deal with.¹ So they approached him very respectfully, greeting him by taking off their hats and bowing low to the ground.

"You were so good to us before," they said, "when we went to get the doe's liver. Help us now also and ask from us what you will."

"Very good," answered Sachwatho, "if you give me the lobes of your ears I will give you what you want." And what else could they do, when they must have the panther's milk? So they cut off the lobes of their ears and gave them to him. Sachwatho milked the mother panther and gave them the milk, with which they at once set off for home. Sachwatho set the panther free, mounted his horse and rode towards the town. When he came near it he let his horse loose again, changed his glittering garments for his old rags, and became once more the poor gooseherd. With a broken bow and a broken arrow in his hand, he rode into the town on an old limping mare. Whosoever passed him laughed at him. When his wife's sisters saw him they said to each other: "There he comes again with empty hands—But *our* husbands have brought the remedy!" And they laughed uproariously at him. The vizier and the high steward took the panther-milk to the king, and their fame spread throughout the land. But their wives became overbearing to their youngest sister—even the king laughed at her and her husband, and

¹ Many pre-Christian and pre-Mahometan tales of Caucasian peoples mention a power or spirit who is the protector of wild beasts.

would not let them come near him. But the gooseherd remained dumb and said nothing to anyone; his wife bore everything patiently and waited always for something to happen.

Soon the king called his sons-in-law to him for the third time, and said: "You two brave young men have twice brought me remedies, but they have not cured me. You must make another attempt: this time you must bring me the Water of Life." Again the two set out, and behind them again the gooseherd. He mounted his lame old nag and stumbled through the streets of the town. But as soon as he got out of the streets he pulled out his horse's hair. At once his horse was beside him and asked what he wanted. He told it the whole story. "I know all about it already," said the horse: "make a long handle for your pitcher, for the Water of Life gushes out between two rocks; they open and shut, and when they clap together fire sparks from them. They clap together just as you clap your hands. I will leap between them, from one side to the other, and at that moment you must get the water with your pail." Sachwatho thought that was all right; he mounted and they set out. Who knows whether they travelled far or whether their way was short? But at length they came to the place where the Water of Life gushed forth. An immense rock stood there, its summit was lost in the heavens and it was divided into two halves; in one moment they separated and locked together again. No living creature could get through between them. "Hold fast to my girths and strike me a sharp blow!" said the horse to Sachwatho. He did so; the horse sprang between the two walls of rock, Sachwatho filled his pitcher, but as he sprang out again the rocks clashed together on the horse's tail and cut it off. Sachwatho dismounted, let

his horse rest and sat down beside it. He had hardly sat down when his two brothers-in-law came up and saw that the same horseman had been before them again, and had already fetched the Water of Life. They asked him for it, and offered him a high price. Sachwatho said he wanted nothing for it, only they must each allow his horse to give them a kick. They had either to agree to that or fail in their enterprise, when ill would have befallen them—but they got the Water of Life after submitting to the kick. They then rode home, gave the Water of Life to the king, who really recovered. The vizier and the high steward naturally refrained from telling their father-in-law the truth, and he was overjoyed to think that he had such heroic sons-in-law. But the wife of the gooseherd was now quite convinced that her husband was nothing but a useless bald-headed fellow; she thought she had deceived herself about him and must now be put to shame by him.

Now that the king believed himself to have such brave sons-in-law, he sent messengers to the king of the next country to say that he intended to make war on him: whosoever was the conqueror should rule over both kingdoms. At the same time he called his army together; both great and small assembled at his orders. The vizier and the high steward put themselves in splendid armour at the head of the army. The gooseherd took out his horse-hair, and at once horse and panther were by his side. Then he put on his golden garments, took up his arms and went off also to the war. He closed with the enemy forces, galloped through their lines, swept off their heads with his sword and threw their bodies aside. And twice as many of the enemy as fell by his hands were killed by his horse and panther.

At close of day the battle ended. Everyone wondered about the unknown hero, but no one knew who he was or where he came from. They looked everywhere for him in vain, for he had already put on his old rags and gone home to his wife, who told him of the heroic deeds of the unknown knight. With the dawn the battle began again. Again the gooseherd put on his golden garments and rode off to fight; but this time he was wounded in the arm. The king noticed that the stranger knight was bleeding; he called him and bound up his wound with his own silken kerchief. Then Sachwatho stole away, changed his grandeur for his old rags, and went back to his hut. The king held a great festival: he had many oxen killed and much wine distributed among the army. At the same time he gave orders that everyone should look out for the knight whose wounded arm was tied up with the king's silken kerchief, and let the king know when he was found.

But when the wine was handed round, there was no one present who had been wounded in the arm. The king was told that every man had stretched out his arm to take the wine, and that everyone had been present. "Good," said the king, "now hand round wine and apples at the same time." For then everyone had to stretch out both hands. When it came to Sachwatho's turn, he only put out one hand and kept the other behind his back. He was ordered to put out his other hand that an apple might be put in it, but he said he did not want an apple, that they should pour him out more wine instead. But that was not allowed to pass, and in this way his wounded arm and its silken bandage were discovered.

Now the king's manner towards him was entirely changed. He embraced him, kissed him, and begged

his forgiveness for his former bad treatment. "I beseech you," he added, "come to the battle again to-morrow and show yourself to me and my people." Next day Sachwatho again pulled the pig's bladder over his head, put on his old rags, mounted his good horse, armed himself, and rode into the fighting. He closed with the enemy and utterly routed his army. The king of the enemy forces sent a messenger to beseech him not to wipe out his whole people, he was conquered and would give up his kingdom. And so the war came to an end and every man went to his own home. Now everyone praised and extolled Sachwatho; no one now spoke of the vizier or the high steward. And Sachwatho's wife sat there and could not feast her eyes enough on her victorious husband. But her sisters wept tears of vinegar with envy. When the king went home he gave Sachwatho and his wife the finest palace he possessed. "Everything must now come out," said Sachwatho one day to his father-in-law. "Call the vizier and the high steward, and ask them where they got the doe's liver. The fact is—I gave it to them, and I have the proof here." As he spoke he showed the king their finger-tips. The king sent for them both, and saw for himself that the tips of their little fingers were missing. "I gave them the panther-milk too," said Sachwatho, "and made them pay for it with the lobes of their ears. I fetched the Water of Life, and my horse helped me. But I did not give it to them for nothing, if you look at their backs you will see the price they paid for it." Everyone saw that the lobes of their ears were missing, and the marks of the horse's hoofs were found on their backs. Shamefacedly they slunk away to their own homes, and their wives did not know what to do for shame.

But soon Sachwatho got tired of sitting at his fire-

side. He said he would go hunting. "Good," said the king, "only I beg of you, do not go outside the boundaries of our own country. For beyond that there lives a witch, who will certainly kill you if she finds you." "We will see about that," said Sachwatho, called his horse and his panther, put on his armour, and set out. But in all the country of his father-in-law he found no game. So he rode beyond its borders, where he found plenty of big game and hunted to his heart's delight. When he got tired and thought he had hunted enough, he unstrung his bow and rested. Away in the distance there was a high tower. As soon as he caught sight of it, he strung his bow afresh and rode towards it. When he arrived at the tower, he went in and sat down on a golden branch to rest. He found also a golden lute and a golden ram. He took the lute and played on it, and as soon as he began to play the ram began to dance and spring about. After a time a woman came in. "Who are you?" she asked him, "and how do you dare to play and make the ram dance in my tower?"

"I am Sachwatho," he answered, "please come in."

"You will kill me," she cried with a stiff wooden voice; "I will not come in."

"I will take care not to kill you," answered Sachwatho.

"Well, if you really do not intend to kill me, then lay that piece of wood there on your horse!" Sachwatho took the piece of wood that she pointed out to him and laid it on his horse. "Now you can come in" he added.

"First lay it on your panther!" He did that too. "Now on your sword." Sachwatho fulfilled that request too. Then the woman screamed and closed with Sachwatho. He called his horse, but it did not move; it was chained with a ninefold chain. He called the panther, but neither could it stir. He called his sword, but it

could not obey, for it too was bound and chained. Then the woman devoured Sachwatho, his horse and his panther.

But at the time when Thavisi and Sachwatho parted from each other, they had drawn their swords and made a compact together that if a drop of blood appeared on one of their swords, it would be a sign that the other needed him. Thavisi often pulled his out of the scabbard to try it. And at the very moment when Sachwatho was devoured, Thavisi looked at his sword; it was covered with drops of blood. "My brother is in danger," he said to himself, "he needs me and my help." He got up, put on his glittering garments, took his arms, his bow and arrow, mounted his trusty steed, said farewell to his father and mother, called his panther and set out. He journeyed on and on and on, he travelled over the whole world, he saw a thousand kingdoms, everywhere he went he asked for his brother, but in vain. At last he came to the country where Sachwatho had lived.

As two halves of an apple resemble each other, so did Thavisi resemble his brother.

Now Sachwatho had not been heard of for a long time. The king gave orders that the whole country should go into mourning for him. But when Thavisi came everyone thought it was Sachwatho himself and there was great joy. The king allowed mourning to be put aside and greeted Thavisi with kisses and embraces. "Praise and thanks to God, my son," he said, "that you have come back to us. How was it that you managed to escape from that woman? Was it by God's help or was it a stroke of luck?" As has been said already, Thavisi was very like Sachwatho. "Yes," he thought, "Sachwatho must have gone away somewhere and never been heard of again. Perhaps he will never come back; that

is why they were mourning for him and are now overjoyed to see me, because they take me for him. I will pretend that I am really Sachwatho." And aloud he added, "I have not been to that woman yet; I will go to-morrow." He was then taken to Sachwatho's house, where Sachwatho's wife fell on his neck and kissed him. Thavisi allowed her to believe he was her husband, but when they went to rest at night, he took his sword and laid it between them, saying: "If you reach over this sword I will cut you to pieces with it; I am dead-tired and not inclined for kisses or caresses." Sachwatho's wife thought her husband must have fallen in love with someone else who had drawn his affection away from her, and so she began to weep bitterly. She wept for a long time, but at last she was so tired that she went to sleep.

The next morning Thavisi went early to the king and asked him where the dreadful woman he had spoken of lived. The king told him, but begged him not to go to her, for he would certainly lose his life if he did. But Thavisi mounted his horse, buckled on his sword, called his panther, and rode away.

He did not even look at the wild beasts he met on the way, but rode straight on to the land of the dreadful woman. He saw the tower, went in, took the golden lute down from the nail, and began to play. And the woman appeared and screamed at him: "Who are you? and what do you want in my tower? How do you dare to play my lute and make my ram dance? If I come into the tower, it is as much as your life is worth."

"I am Thavisi," he answered; "if you wish, come in."

"No! I am afraid of you, you will kill me," cried the woman in a frightened voice, as if she was really afraid.

"Aha!" thought Thavisi, "that is how she deceived

my brother. I will watch and see what she does now." And he said aloud: "Come in, I will not use my weapons against a woman."

"Well, if you speak the truth," she replied, "take that piece of wood and lay it on your horse." Thavisi pretended to do as she asked.

"That is right; now touch your panther with the wood."

"I will willingly do that too," he replied, "but please come in."

"No, you must first lay it on your sword."

"Very good," he replied, pretending again to do as she asked; "but now please come in."

And whenever she came in, Thavisi struck her head off. But she had three heads! And she was in a furious rage. And now Thavisi and his horse and his panther began all three to fight against the woman. Thavisi cut off her second head. "Tell me, witch, where is my brother? What have you done with him?" "If you will not kill me, I will tell you," answered the woman. "There is a box in my head, and therein sits your brother with his horse and his panther." Thavisi cut off that head, split it open, and brought out his brother. They embraced each other.

"Ah! what a long time I have been asleep," cried Sachwatho.

"Yes, and you would never have wakened again if I had not come," said Thavisi, and told him all that had happened. Then they mounted their horses and rode homewards. A man who saw them on the way went straight to the king and said, "Your son-in-law has come home, but there are two of him! One man has become two!"

"What is that you are saying?" said the king. "Did

anyone ever hear of such a thing, that one man should become two!" And turning to his courtiers and pointing to the bringer of the news, he commanded, "Off with his head!" But in the same moment another man arrived, and announced that the king's son-in-law was approaching, but in a double form. This man's head was cut off too. When a third messenger arrived with the same news, the king said to the queen: "Go and see if there is any truth in this story." The queen went and looked; and in very truth she saw two men coming, who were so like each other that it was impossible to tell the one from the other.

When they both, Sachwatho and Thavisi, came to the king, he did not know which was Sachwatho and which Thavisi. Sachwatho's wife was in doubt too, but Thavisi told them the whole story, and the king was amazed but overjoyed. He ordered that a great feast should be held and he made Sachwatho king. Then Sachwatho invited all his people to the feast and treated them with kingly hospitality. Afterwards they went to visit Thavisi, who had become king in his own country, and there they held high festival again. And when the feast was over, Sachwatho returned to his country and Thavisi remained in his.

Sorrow there, joy here,
 Bran there, flour here.
 I dragged a carriage up the mountain,
 It has become like a mountain.
 Call me out of this life
 Into Eternity.

Elasa, Melasa,
 A mirror hangs round my neck,
 The listener and the teller
 Shall marry each other.

12. BUKUTSCHICHAN

THERE was once a miller called Lause-Hadschi.¹ And it happened on one occasion that the rags he had gathered together in heaps disappeared. "That must not be allowed to pass," he said, "I must find the thief," and he hid himself behind the door. He had not long to wait till he saw a fox slink in, and the fox had no hair underneath and his coat was all dishevelled on his back. "Aha! you mangy wretch! it is you, is it?" said Lause-Hadschi, and flung himself with a cudgel on the fox. "Slowly, miller, slowly!" said the fox. "The rapid river does not find the sea, as the proverb says. Will you kill me because of these few rags I have carried away from you? I will make you rich because of them. I will marry you to the chan's daughter, I will make you great and famous. Under one condition, however: you must feed me with kurdjuk² as long as I live, and when I die you must bury me in one." The miller gladly agreed to all this.

Then the fox ran away and scraped about in a dust-heap till he found an abbas.³ He ran with it to the chan's castle, which lay on the other side of the river. He said to the chan: "Forgive me for making so free, but I came to ask you for a measure with which to measure Bukutschichan's silver. I have tried everywhere to get one, but could not hear of one anywhere." "Who is this Bukutschichan, then?" asked the chan. "I have never heard anything about him."

"He exists, nevertheless," answered the fox; "I am his vizier." He took the measure and ran away.

¹ The pilgrims to Mecca are called *Hadschi*, because they have made the pilgrimage, or *Hadschi*, to Mecca.

² The fat tail of a special breed of sheep.

³ The present name of the twenty-kopek-piece in the Caucasus.

In the evening he brought back the measure after he had stuck the abbas into a crack in it. "I should like to know if it is true what that good-for-nothing fox told me," said the chan, and shook his measure. The coin at once fell out. "It must seemingly be true, then," he said thoughtfully to himself, "but I wonder who this Bukutschichan is?"

Next day the fox came again; this time he wanted a measure to measure his master's gold. When he had got what he asked for, he searched and searched till he found a gold coin, stuck it too into a crack in the measure, and brought the measure back to its owner. "We have only just got finished before dark by working very hard," he lied. He had hardly gone, when the chan shook the measure again and the gold coin fell out. How astonished the chan was!

After a time the fox came back again. But this time he came to ask the hand of the chan's daughter in marriage for his master. The chan nearly died with joy. "I will come to-morrow with Bukutschichan," said the fox and ran away home. The following day he made a robe of state for Lause-Hadschi out of brightly coloured Alpine flowers, then he made him a set of weapons from the wood of a lime tree with cords of bast and many other similarly artificial things. Bukutschichan—for that was what he was called now—looked like a rainbow when seen from a distance. When everything was ready the fox said to him: "The chan will ride with his retinue to meet you as far as the river. But as you ride through the river cry, 'Help! help! the river is carrying me away!' and dive underneath. Then the chan's retinue will pull you out of the water, and everything will be all right."

And so it all happened. When Bukutschichan got to

the middle of the river, he pretended that the stream was carrying him off and cried for help. The river naturally washed off everything he had on, and when the chan's people pulled him out of the water he was as naked as when he was born. But they at once offered him clothing and weapons. Bukutschichan dressed himself and now looked a fine fellow. But as he had never had anything to wear except a mangy skin, the new clothes seemed strange to him and he could not hide his awkwardness. He tugged here and pulled there, smoothed out here and pushed to the side somewhere else. "What is he doing?" the chan's followers asked the fox. "It looks as if he had never had proper clothes to put on before." "What were his clothes made of?" asked the followers another time. "He looked like a rainbow."

"They were priceless," lied the fox; "covered all over with diamonds and precious stones. But he has plenty of clothes like that: it does not matter having lost those. What I am sorry about is his sword. That was an ancient Stamboul sword, which he inherited from his ancestors. There will never be another like it!"

"Yes, yes! It must have been made of pure silver," said the followers, "we noticed how it glittered in the sun."

When they arrived at the chan's palace, Bukutschichan was still more astonished. He looked up at the roof and down at the floor, his glance swept along the walls and he examined everything most particularly. "Whatever is he doing?" the chan's followers asked. "He is behaving as if he had never seen a house before," the chan said to the fox. "No, no, it is not that at all!" answered the fox. "It is only that . . . yours does not please him."

And Bukutschichan married the chan's daughter. The wedding festivities lasted a whole week, the bride got a magnificent trousseau, and when the newly-married pair went away, they had every kind of escort imaginable—riders and pedestrians, drummers, flute-players, singers, youths, maidens, and a great crowd of people. "I will hurry on in front and get the house in order," said the fox, "you can follow after." He had no sooner spoken than he tore away as fast as his legs could carry him.

Whether he ran for a long time or a short time, who knows? At any rate, he came at last to a plain on which a great herd was grazing. "To whom do these cattle belong?" he asked. "To the dragon," the shepherd answered.

"Take care, take care!" said the fox. "Don't mention the name of the dragon again; he is as good as dead. The army of the seven kings is coming to kill him with cannons and mortars, with powder and lead. If you say you are the dragon's shepherd, they will certainly put you to death and carry off your herd. But there is a chan—he is called Bukutschichan—whom even the kings are afraid of; if anyone asks you who the cattle belong to, say only they belong to Bukutschichan; then no one will do you any harm."

The fox then rushed on and came to a drove of the dragon's horses, then to his flocks of sheep, then to his harvesters, and everywhere he told the same story.

He ran on further and further till at last he came to the dragon's palace. "Dragon!" he cried, "Dragon! I have not forgotten your hospitality, and I have come to warn you. The army of the seven kings is coming on behind me with cannons, mortars, guns and so on. What will you do?"

"Alas! what can I do?" answered the dragon; "against

such an army I can do nothing! Do you not know some place, Mr. Fox, where I could hide myself?"

"Hide yourself here," said the fox, and pointed to a mountainous stack of hay which stood in the middle of the court, "only be quick about it, for the army is following close on my heels."

The dragon hid himself as quickly as he could, and the fox . . . set a light to the hay-stack at all four corners. The dragon was roasted like a sausage in the gigantic fire.

And now the newly-married pair were advancing, with music and drums, with outriders and singers. There was a great commotion round about them, shouting, and volleys of firing. When they came to the great plain where the cattle were grazing they asked who the herd belonged to. "To Bukutschichan," was the answer. When they came to the drove of horses and asked the same question, they got the same answer. And when they came to the flocks of sheep and asked whom they belonged to, the answer was still the same: "To Bukutschichan." When they came to the harvesters and asked to whom these fields and meadows belonged, they were told again: "To Bukutschichan." And the retinue was not a little astonished at the unheard-of riches of its master. He himself had no idea how it had all come about: he came near to losing his reason with it all. Finally they came to the dragon's castle. There the fox awaited them. He sent back the retinue of the young couple; he established Bukutschichan and his wife upstairs while he made himself at home below. Bukutschichan had a splendid time there; he had nothing to do, for the fox took all burdens on his own shoulders.

But the fox was anxious to know what Bukutschichan really thought of him. For that reason he lay down

once in the middle of the court and pretended to be dead. "Look, there lies our fox; he looks as if he were dead," said Mrs. Bukutschichan to her husband. "And if he were seven times dead it would be all the same to me," answered Bukutschichan. "I have been tired of that useless creature for a long time."

Hardly had he spoken, when the fox sprang to his feet and began a little song:

Shall I or shall I not
Tell the story of Lause-Hadschi
And of the wooden gun?
Of the miller who was in a scrape?

Who fell on his knees? Who begged, who implored the fox not to give him away? Lause-Hadschi.

And who generously forgave? The fox.

But everything comes to an end. . . . One day the fox really died. But Bukutschichan, who thought it was another trick, rolled him up in a kurdjuk. And the fox is supposed to be in it still to this day.

13. BALAI AND BOTI

ONCE upon a time there was a king who had three sons. But what we are about to relate happened after the death of the king.

The sons heard that there lived in the south a king who had a daughter: she had vowed she would marry no one but he who could overcome her in single combat. The eldest brother made up his mind to try his luck. He dressed himself in fine clothes, put on handsome weapons, mounted a good horse and set out on his way after saying farewell to his brothers.

He rode on and on for a long way. He left broad

valleys and deep gorges behind him, he crossed endless plains. And on his way he met an old man.

"Whither away, my son?" he asked; "where do you want to go, if God wills?" The young man told him all his plans.

"What is dearer to you," asked the old man, "the maiden or the counsel of old age?"

"I can give advice myself," answered the young man, "and the maiden is dearer to me than your counsels."

"Then good journey to you, my son."

The young man rode on, and came at last to the town of the king whose daughter he had come to court. He dismounted before the great gate of the town; the king's men came at once and took his arms, led his horse away and showed him the guest-rooms. Then they set before him all that was best in the kitchen, brought him sweet wine to drink, and the vizier came to talk with him.

"Guest," said he, after they had eaten, drunk, and passed some time in pleasant conversation, "Guest, what do you desire?"

"I desire to measure my strength against that of the king's daughter!"

"If that is truly your desire, know this: to-morrow morning at daybreak, be ready and go to the square. There you will find the princess. If fortune favours you, you will conquer her; but if she vanquishes you, your head will be cut off and stuck up on a pole." When he had thus spoken, the vizier got up and went away. These prospects did not make the guest particularly happy.

He could not get a wink of sleep the whole night through, but next morning he was punctually at his station. And as the sun rose out of the sea the princess arrived. Her armour shone brighter than the morning sun. She stepped forward, placed herself in front of her

opponent and bared her breast. The young man swooned and fell down. Slaves hurried up, struck off his head and stuck it on a pole.

Some time passed, and then one day the second brother set out to enquire as to the fate of the eldest brother, and, if opportunity offered, to fight with the princess. He travelled by the same road, and met the same old man that the other brother had met. But why waste time telling all this? The adventure cost him also his head.

The youngest son waited long for the return of his brothers. Finally he made up his mind to go and see for himself what had happened to them. He also was determined to measure himself against the princess in single combat. He rode day and night till he met the old man.

"Whither away, my son?" he asked. "Where are you going, if God wills?"

The young man told him his intentions. "Which is dearer to you, the maiden or the advice of an old man?" "The maiden does not displease me," answered the youth, "but I should be glad to hear the advice of an old man."

"Hear, then!" returned the old man. "She does not conquer her adversaries by strength, but by opening her shift and baring her breast. Not even the strongest man can endure that. Therefore, if she tries the same method with you, cast your eyes down and rush at her; you will overpower her easily."

The youth thanked the old man for his advice, urged his horse forward, and rode on. When he came to the gate of the king's town he dismounted. And just as had happened to his brothers, the king's servants helped him, fed him and gave him wine to drink, and the vizier came and entertained him . . . in fact, everything happened just as it had done to the two elder brothers.

Before sunrise the youth rose, and with the sun the princess arrived. She opened her shift and bared her breast, but the youth did not let his eyes rest on her, he rushed at her instead and overcame her. "Shall I spare you, you wretch, or shall I cut off your head?" he demanded, holding his dagger at her throat. "Spare me! I am yours!" besought the vanquished princess. "Then come away with me at once," he replied, "I must get home quickly."

"I will come," said the princess, "if you will do one thing for me. Otherwise I will not come with you and will not marry you."

"If you had conquered me," the youth replied, "my head would by now have been stuck on a pole—and yet you even demand services from me! So be it. You are a woman. I could not descend to trickery as you do. Command me! What must I do?" Then the princess took a golden slipper out of a box and threw it down before the youth. "The neighbour to that is lost," she said. "Find it!"

He stuck the slipper in his knapsack, mounted his horse and rode away. He rode fast, he rode slow, he crossed high mountains and deep gorges, he crossed broad rivers, he rode over endless plains till he came to a beautiful meadow covered with flowers. In the middle of the meadow there was a garden as lovely as Paradise, and in the garden beautiful tents were erected. He dismounted by the tents, let his horse loose and went in. Everything was in order, but no living soul was within. In the centre of the tent a spring bubbled up. He bathed in it, and then lay down to sleep. After a time someone wakened him.

"Well, friend," said the new-comer, "is this perhaps the garden of your father, that you let your horse loose

in it? Get up and show your courage!" Our hero sprang up, looked round him and saw a youth with a beaming countenance. "How will you fight, on foot or on horse-back?" the youth asked him. "On foot," came the answer. They closed with each other and fought and fought, but neither of them could throw the other. They wrestled on . . . till midday, till afternoon—the sun was about to sink, and still they both stood upright. "Enough!" said the unknown, "let me go. To-morrow morning early I will come again. My sheep are pasturing behind that hill, go there this evening and eat and drink, for no one will come to wait on you here." Having so spoken, he disappeared.

Our hero rode over to where the sheep were grazing. The shepherds came to meet him, held his horse, took off his cloak, killed a sheep, put the roasting spit on the fire, and showed him every hospitality. When he had eaten and drunk, the shepherds went away; only he and one young man were left sitting by the fire. "Whom do these sheep belong to?" asked our hero. "They all belong to a maiden whose castle is not far from here, and the castle is guarded by two dragons."

And after our hero had enquired the way to the castle, he took a carcase of mutton with him and rode towards it. He opened the gate and rode in, when two dragons rushed towards him. He tore the sheep in two and threw a half to each of them. Then he pushed on into the building, and came to the young man with whom he had wrestled, lying fast asleep. It was not a young man, however, but a maiden. "Stand up, wretch," said our hero and laid his hand on her breast, "I will rather fight with you by night than by day!" The maiden sprang up at once, they closed with each other, and they fought and they wrestled, but neither could get the other down.

When every other means had failed him, our hero pressed the maiden's right breast—something cracked like a nut—and the maiden fell down. "Now I am yours, you can do with me what you will," she said. And she had no sooner spoken than a mullah¹ came out of one corner, his budun out of the other, and they celebrated the marriage of the two. Now they were man and wife.

They stayed together for three nights: on the fourth night our hero made himself ready to depart. "Whither away, what is your hurry?" asked his wife. "Where did you come from?" Then he told her what had happened between him and the king's daughter, pulled the slipper out of his knapsack and threw it down before her. "But this slipper must have fallen off my foot," said his wife. "Where else could she have got it?" And she gave him the other one.

Our hero put both slippers in his knapsack, bade his wife farewell, swung himself up on his horse, and rode away.

When he got back to the king's daughter, he threw her the slippers, saying, "There you are, take them!" "Very good!" said she. "But there is a man called Balai who has a wife called Boti. If you do not discover for me what has passed between them, then I will not marry you." Our hero only shook his head, mounted again and rode off by a way which no one had ever ridden before. He rode fast, he rode slow, he rode day and night, he rode a long, long, endless way till at last he came to a land in which there was mud when the sun shone and dust when it rained. He dismounted and fastened his horse under a tree whose branches lost themselves in heaven. He looked round, he looked up, and at last he

¹ A Mahometan priest: the budun is his assistant.

saw at the very top of the tree an eagle's nest with young eagles in it, each one as big as an ox. He climbed up and a three-headed dragon followed on his heels—but with one stroke our hero cut off all three heads. In a short time the mother eagle flew up—trees and mountains swayed with her flight—and sat down on her nest. "Welcome, hero!" the mother eagle called out to him, "let me be your mother now, and you my son! You have destroyed the enemy of my children. Ask what you will! However great your wish may be, I will fulfil it."

"Carry me to Balai's and Boti's house," said our hero. "If you wish to do me a service, that is what I want most."

"Ah! but if we go there, neither of us will ever return!" said the mother eagle. "Ask something else. You can stay here while I carry out your commands."

"I have nothing else to ask you," answered our hero, "if you will not come with me yourself, at least show me the way there."

"No, if you will go to certain death, then I may not stay behind," replied the mother eagle. "Seat yourself on my back."

And she spread her wings; with every flap of her wings another mountain was left behind, or a river or a country; at last she glided down on to the peak of a high hill. Before the hill stood a tower which seemed to stretch up to heaven.

"Balai and Boti live in this tower," said the mother eagle, "go to them, say what you have to say, ask what you have to ask, and come back here in due time. If you have good fortune, he will not let his arrow fly at you till you have reached me; if you have not good fortune . . . well, no one has ever come back from them

before you, and no one will ever come back after you." Our hero went to the tower.

"Will you receive a guest?" he asked.

"Why not, friend?" answered Balai, who stood up, took him by the hand, asked him to come in and sit down, and enquired where he came from and what he wanted. Our hero told him everything down to the smallest detail.

"Well, well, we will have something to eat first," declared Balai, "and then I will tell you what passed between Boti and myself." The food was brought; when they had finished, Balai gave what was over to a greyhound, and what was left after that to a woman who was already half turned to stone and stood behind the door. She did not want to eat; Balai took up a whip and threatened her with it—and she ate. Our hero lost patience with him and asked why he gave the woman what the dog had left, and what her sin had been.

"I am Balai," said the master of the house, "and that is my wife. After we were married we lived for a long time in perfect concord. But then, whenever I lay down beside her, she became cold, as cold as a heap of snow, as cold as an icicle. (When he goes away—said Balai to himself—I will shoot the arrow after him.) I came to be suspicious of her, and watched her secretly. One night I made a cut in my thumb and put salt in the wound that I might not go to sleep, and lay down beside her pretending to be asleep. (As soon as he goes I will let the arrow fly after him). . . . After a time I saw how she got up, dressed herself and left the house. I got up too, took my weapons and followed her. I had two horses in the stable; one of the winds, the other of the clouds. She took out the horse of the winds and mounted it, I did the same with the horse of the clouds,

and rode after her. (Whenever he goes I will shoot the arrow after him.) She in front, I after her; she in front, I after her. But the horse of the winds was swifter than the horse of the clouds; I did not lose sight of her certainly, but I fell behind. We rode for some time like this till we came to the tower of the Narts.¹ Boti tied up her horse at the foot, and climbed up to the top storey; I did the same. (Whenever he goes I will shoot the arrow after him.) She opened a door and went in; I stood so that she could not see me and watched her. There were seven Nart brothers inside who amused themselves by throwing my wife from one to another, as children play with a ball. When they were tired of that game they began to eat and drink. And when they tired of that too, one of the brothers came outside; with one stroke of my sword I struck his head off, and that I repeated with five more of them. (Whenever he goes I will shoot the arrow after him.) There only remained my wife and the youngest Nart in the room. 'I will surely get the better of one,' I thought to myself, and went in. But the youngest drew his sword and set upon me. Boti ran to the side and watched us. I struck, he struck; I don't know whether I had more luck or more skill, anyway I struck off one of his legs. He fell to the ground, and Boti ran out of the room. (Whenever he goes I will send an arrow after him.) I left the Nart lying there and ran after my wife, but before I could catch her she had mounted the horse of the winds and ridden off. I sprang on my horse of the clouds and made after her. She got home before me, took my magic whip in her hand, and waited for me; I was hardly into the room before she struck me with it, and said, 'Change into a dog,' and I became a dog. (Whenever he goes I will send an

¹ See note on the Narts, p. ix.

arrow after him.) For seven years I remained a shepherd's dog; in the eighth year she struck me again with the magic whip and I changed into a hawk. I flew straight home. After a short time Boti came too, she hung the whip on a nail and went out. I flew to the whip, struck against it, and said, 'Change me back into Balai as I was before!' And it was so. (Whenever he goes I will shoot an arrow after him.) I took the whip and flung myself on my wife; she started back, gave a dreadful cry, and fell to the ground. 'Do not be afraid,' I said to her, 'I will not kill you, but you must suffer what I have had to suffer. Change into a sheep-dog.' And as long as I had herded sheep she had now to herd them. Then I changed her into a mule, then into a being half human and half stone as she is now, and she gets the scraps left by the dogs for her food. (Whenever he goes I will shoot an arrow after him.) And now know this: the king's daughter who overcame your brothers is a sister of Boti's. And the Nart whose leg I struck off is really her husband. She hides him in a cellar under the room in which she lives, and she has a son by him. Now you know what passed between Balai and Boti; but . . . (Whenever he goes I will shoot an arrow after him.)"

When Balai had finished speaking, our hero said: "May I look over your house and court now?" He went out, and ran as fast as he could to where the mother eagle awaited him. She took him at once on her back and carried him away with great sweeps of her mighty wings. She left high mountains and deep ravines behind her: she flew as on the wings of the storm.

But Balai waited and waited for his guest, who was looking over his house and court as Balai thought. He

waited for a long time, he waited till midday . . . but the guest did not return. "What can have happened to him?" said Balai and went out to look for him. All in vain. When at last it dawned on Balai that his guest had made good his escape, he shot an arrow after him which struck the eagle on one of her wings. Feathers flew all about as if out of a torn cushion. "Has he hit you?" the eagle asked our hero. "No, the arrow flew past under my left ear," he answered, "and cut off some of my hair: how are you?" "My bones are not touched," said the mother eagle, "if we have any luck, he won't shoot again." Balai did not shoot again and the eagle carried our hero back to the king's town and then flew home to her own nest.

But our hero called all the inhabitants of the town together—the king, the vizier, and all the people—and led them to the princess. There he related all that he had learnt from Balai. The princess was embarrassed, but denied everything. "That is not true," she said; "you have not even seen Balai, for no one can escape his arrow. How did you escape his shot?"

"If you wish to know which of us is lying," said our hero to the king, "then look in the cellar under your daughter's room. For the man whose leg Balai struck off must be there. He is now the lame husband of your daughter; and her son must be there too. If I have lied, then you may kill me, but if I have spoken the truth, put this miserable wretch to death." The princess got deadly pale at these words. But that availed her nothing; the search was made, and what our hero had said was found to be true. "You have brought shame and disgrace on my head," said the king and struck down his daughter; while our hero gave the finishing stroke to the Nart and his son.

After all these deeds and after he had come through so many dangers unharmed, our hero went back to his wife and became king in his own country.

14. THE VIRGIN QUEEN

ONCE upon a time—the sun burned hotly, the rain fell in torrents—once upon a time there was a king. He was a wise king, his rule was just, and the whole land obeyed him. He had three sons.

Now it so happened that he became blind and an illness robbed him of his bodily powers. The sons took counsel together, and then went to their father. "Father," they said to him, "is there no remedy which would give you back your sight? Is there no cure for your illness? Command us, and even if it costs us our lives we will seek and find whatsoever can help you."

"Then bring me fruit from the garden of the Virgin Queen, that is the only cure for my eyes and my illness," answered the king.

They first sent out the eldest son on this errand. He mounted a good horse, put on trusty weapons and gave rein to his steed. He rode over our mountains (*i.e.* the Caucasus), over mountains of other lands, over the Elsterberg, the Dohlenberg, the Schneeberg, and the Eisberg. Behind it he met an old man with a snow-white beard, who sat there and sewed the cracks in the path together which had been caused by the heat.

"Greetings to you, old man," said the rider; "may your work not succeed."

"Greetings to you, too, my son," answered the old man; "may your work not succeed either!"

Our hero rode and galloped till at last he came to a land where the rivers were of milk and the grapes

ripened in winter. He found beautiful gardens there with every imaginable kind of fruit. "If the Virgin Queen has gardens," he thought, "these must surely be hers," and he filled his saddle-bags with all kinds of fruit and rode home.

"Greetings to you, father!" he cried, and handed him his saddle-bags.

"Greetings to you also, my son," said the king. "Why have you been so long, or why have you returned so quickly?"

"Truly, father," said his son, "I was at a place where the rivers ran milk and the grapes ripened in winter. And there I found a beautiful garden. If the Virgin Queen has gardens, I thought, then these must be hers. I picked this fruit for you, and here it is."

"Alas! my son! It is far, far to the garden of the Virgin Queen," the father replied sadly. "That place you were at, I know it too; I was often there in my youth. I went there in less time than it takes to boil a dumpling."

Now the second son set out. He mounted his trusty horse, put on his finest weapons, gave rein to his steed and rode off. And behind the Eisberg he found the old man sewing up the cracks in the paths. "Greetings, old man! May your work not succeed!" said the rider.

"Greetings to you also, my son, neither may your work succeed!" answered the old man.

Our rider rode and galloped on; he rode through the land where the grapes ripen in winter, on to another land where a river of oil flowed, where there was both mud and dust up to the knees. He found such gardens there that he forgot all other gardens he had ever seen. The fruit that grew there could only be compared to that to be found in Paradise. He filled his saddle-bags with it and rode home.

"Greetings to you, father," he said, and handed him the bags.

"Greetings to you also, my son," answered the king. "Why have you been so long? Why have you come back so soon?"

"Truly, father," said his son, "I rode over the river of milk and through the land where the grapes ripen in winter, and came to a country where there flows a river of oil, where the mud came up to my knees, but the air was at the same time full of dust. And there I found a garden like the Garden of Eden. This, I thought, must be the garden of the Virgin Queen, and there I picked this fruit I now give you."

"Alas! alas! my son!" answered the king, "I often rode in my youth to that country where you were in less time than it takes to smoke a pipe of tobacco. But it is a long way from there to the garden of the Virgin Queen."

And now the youngest son made ready to set out. When he arrived behind the Eisberg, he found the old man who was sewing up the cracks in the path. "Greetings to you, father, may your work succeed," he said. "Greetings to you also, my son, may your work also succeed," answered the old man. "Have you no good advice to give me, old man?" the youth asked, "I want to go to the garden of the Virgin Queen, and there to fetch some fruit."

"Certainly, my son," replied the old man. "I have not only one piece of advice for you, but three. Listen to me! You will come to the milk river, then the oil river, and lastly to a river of honey. From there you must ride on as far again as you have ridden already till you come to a crystal tower, a silver tower and a gold tower, so high that they seem to reach right up into heaven.

These are the towers in which the Virgin Queen lives. You will find an iron lock. Do not imagine you can open it by hand. No, hammer a nail into a piece of wood and open it with that. When you get into the garden, wrap some grass round your feet. And do not pick the fruit with your hands, split up a stick at the end and pick the fruit with that." "Thank you, father!" said the youth and gave his horse its head.

Across the milk river, across the oil river, across the honey river he rode, and in the twilight arrived at the towers of the Virgin Queen. He tied his horse up to a post, stuck a nail in a piece of wood and stuck it in the lock. "Iron conquers me! Iron conquers me!" cried the lock. "What should conquer iron then, if not iron itself?" said the Virgin Queen from within the tower. "Be still and let me sleep!" She thought that one half of the lock had merely pressed against the other. The youth wrapped his feet in grass and went into the garden. "Grass conquers me! Grass conquers me!" bewailed the grass of the garden. "Of course grass conquers grass," said the queen. "Let me sleep!" (She thought that the grasses in the garden were blowing against each other.) Then the youngest son took a piece of wood, split it up at one end, and picked the fruit with it. "Wood conquers us! Wood conquers us!" cried all the trees of the garden. "That is a matter of course," said the queen, "that wood conquers wood." She thought that one branch had rubbed against another.

When the youth had picked his fruit, he mounted his horse and was about to set out for home, when it struck him that he must see the Virgin Queen even though it cost him his life. So he went up the stair, walked in and looked at her. She lay on a golden bed, on her brow

she had a star and under her shoulder the moon shone out. Her waist could be spanned by two fingers, but if one then let her go, she would fill the whole world. Gold and silver lamps stood at her head and at her feet; in the middle of the room a table was spread, and on it stood a beaker of wine. There was every kind of food and all sorts of drinks, only Widwid¹ milk was lacking. And in order that the inmates of the tower might know that he had been there, the youth partook lustily of the food and drink, kissed the sleeping queen three times and bit her gently on the cheek, but she did not wake.

And then he set out for home to his father.

"Greetings to you, father," he said, and handed him the bag.

"Greetings to you also, my son," said the father. "Why have you been so long? Why are you back so soon?"

"Father, I was in the garden of the Virgin Queen," said the youth. "I brought back this fruit for you: may it really cure you of all your ills." The father tasted the fruit and said: "Well done, my son; my eyes will now see again and my body will recover."

When the Virgin Queen had slept out her sleep, she looked in a mirror and saw where the youth had bitten her on the cheek. Then she examined the food and drink on the table and noticed that someone had tasted them. She turned to her mirror and asked it who had been there, and the mirror told her the whole story. She ruled over seven kingdoms, and she gathered together the armies from all seven and marched on the country of the blind king. She set up her camp before his capital and sent him a message that he should send her at once whosoever had picked the fruit in her garden.

¹ No one, even in the Caucasus, knows what that may be.

At first the eldest son went out and declared it had been he. "Listen, brave boaster," she said to him, "how did you pick the fruit?" "How I picked the fruit?" he replied. "With my hands, of course." "That won't do, my good fellow," she answered, "go home again." Then the second brother came out, but he also was sent home.

Finally the youngest brother came. "Listen, brave boaster, did you pick the fruit in my garden?" she asked him.

"Who else if not I?" he answered.

"And how did you pick it?" she asked further. He told her exactly how he had picked it. Then she stood up, kissed him three times before all the people, and bit him on one cheek. Then she kissed him again, bit him on the other cheek, and said: "According to use and wont one is entitled to ask that that which has been stolen should be repaid twofold."

And then they went arm in arm to the blind king. The Virgin Queen passed her hand over her face, then she stroked the face and touched the body of the king with the same hand. And at once he recovered his sight and his illness went from him. He became as strong as a buffalo.

Then the youngest son married his queen. They had sons who were like their father, and daughters who were like their mother in every particular. And they live to this day in happiness and contentment.

15. THE THREE WISHES

ONCE upon a time there was a widow who had heard that God would undoubtedly fulfil three wishes wished by anyone on the fifteenth night of the fast of Ramadan.

The good woman got quite impatient: "Oh! if it were only Ramadan already."

Who knows whether she had long to wait? At any rate Ramadan came at last, and then very soon the fifteenth night of the fast. At midnight the widow uttered her first wish: "Oh, God, make my son's head bigger!" Her wish was fulfilled at once: in one moment her son's head had become as big as an iron kettle. The widow could hardly believe her eyes, but it was so. Terrified, she uttered her second wish: "Lord! make my son's head smaller!" And his head grew less and less till it was hardly as big as a millet seed! But now the good woman came to her senses and uttered her third wish: "Almighty God! make my son's head again as it was before."

And this wish too was fulfilled to her.

16. ARSUMAN

THERE was once a couple who had one son and one daughter. The son was called Arsuman.

One day the wife was ill and said to her husband, "I would like some meat." "What kind of meat would you like?" he asked. "I would like some of Arsuman's flesh," she answered. The man took his son, killed him and gave his wife to eat. The daughter said when she came home, "Mother, I am hungry." "There in the corner is your soup, take it and eat," answered the mother. But as the daughter ate her soup, she saw a little finger lying in it. "That is my brother's little finger," she said, rolled it in a napkin and carried it to the church. There the little finger changed into a bird. The bird flew away, and went first to a draper. "What

will you give me if I sing you a little song?" asked the bird. "A piece of silk," answered the merchant. And the bird began to sing:

I am a little bird, bird, bird,
I am a Tirilili, tirili!
My father killed me,
My mother ate me,
My little sister let me fly away.
I am a little bird.

When he had got his silk he flew away to a shop where needles were sold, and he asked: "What will you give me if I sing you a song?" "A packet of needles," was the answer. And again the bird sang:

I am a little bird, bird, bird,
I am a Tirilili, tirili!
My father killed me,
My mother ate me,
My little sister let me fly away.
I am a little bird.

When he had got his needles, he flew to a shoemaker, sang his song and got a pair of shoes. Then he flew to a pin-shop, sang his little song and got a paper of pins. From there he flew to the roof of his father's house, perched on it and called: "Father, look up here!" The father said: "But perhaps you will take your revenge on me! I am frightened." "Don't be frightened," answered the bird. "Hold a sieve in front of your face and look up."

And as the father looked up, the bird threw the needles in his face and blinded him. Then he called his mother and blinded her with the pins. But then he called his little sister and told her to hold up the hem of her dress, he wanted to give her something. And he threw the silk into her dress and then the shoes, and flew away and was never seen any more.

17. THE FAITHFUL SERVANT

ONCE upon a time there was a king who had three sons. Now he wanted to test them in order to find out which was the cleverest, and to that end he gave each of them five or six hundred roubles, saying: "Go and do what you like with the money, amuse yourselves well."

The two elder sons soon found friends with whom they spent the money in merrymaking. The youngest sought for friends, but finding none to his mind determined to spend the money on something useful. He passed through a graveyard and saw there a man striking a grave with a stick.¹ He went up to the man and asked him why he did that. "The dead man who lies here owes me seventy roubles; that is why I insult his grave," answered the man. The king's son at once pulled out this sum, gave it to the man and told him he must stop his shameful conduct and leave the grave in peace. Then the king's son went home, but he was very much afraid at the thought of having to tell his father how he had spent his money. The other two brothers arrived at the same time from their merrymaking.

Three days later the king called his sons to him, and asked them what they had done with their money and what adventures they had had. The two elder brothers told what a gay time they had had, and how they had spent their money. But the youngest told what had happened to him in the graveyard. "Except for these seventy roubles which I gave to the grave-spoiler, I have not spent anything. I have all the rest still," he added.

The king was very angry with his two elder sons:

¹ In the Caucasus this is regarded as the greatest insult one can offer the dead.

but he praised the youngest highly for his conduct, and promised that he should be king after his father died. "But for the present," he added, "you shall have your own house and as much money as you require. Get some things together and engage a servant; but only take a man who, when you say to him at dinner: 'Come here and dine with me,' refuses your invitation."

A few days later the youngest son went to the bazaar to seek for a servant. He found one, and that evening when he sat down to dinner he invited him to come and dine with him. The servant accepted the invitation, but the prince, who had not forgotten his father's advice, dismissed him the following day and engaged another. This one too, for the same reason, he had to part with at once. But the third refused the invitation to dine with his master in these words: "Dine, sir? I will dine on what is left over." And no matter how often the prince repeated his invitation, the servant remained firm and said only, "After you, sir." "This is the servant my father spoke of," said the prince to himself, "I will keep him." And he engaged him for a wage of seventy roubles.

And the servant was in truth both useful and clever, and the prince became very fond of him. After some time the prince collected a large party to journey into a neighbouring country. One or two merchants attached themselves to the party. Now there were two ways into that country, one took seven days, the other three months; but the shorter way was very dangerous: whosoever chose the shorter way invariably disappeared, no one knew where to. But in spite of that, the servant advised the prince to go by the shorter way. "But whoever travels by that road never returns!" said the prince. "There is no reason why you should

trouble yourself about that," answered the servant, "I beg you to choose the shorter way." And the prince, who had a great affection for his servant, agreed to his request and let it be known that he had chosen to travel by the shorter way. The merchants who had attached themselves to his party begged him to alter his plans, but the prince kept to his resolve.

And so they set out. In the evening they pitched their camp at a certain place, had a meal and then lay down to rest. The servant kept watch. About midnight the prince's dog began to bark and the servant heard someone talking to it from behind a bush, "Here, dog, your master will probably kill you soon, and smear your blood on his eyes; let me take some of his goods." But the dog barked right on till morning, and the servant watched all that time.

In a short time they reached their destination successfully, sold their wares, bought new goods, and were finished with their business when those merchants who had chosen the long way arrived. They were not a little surprised that the prince's party had come through the short way unharmed. The servant invited them to attach themselves to the prince's party, at least for the homeward journey, and to travel by the short way. This time they agreed and all set out together.

It so happened that they pitched their camp one night at the same place where the prince's party had spent a night on the outward journey. When everyone was asleep and only the servant was on guard, the dog barked again at midnight, and again the servant heard a voice behind a bush: "Your master will soon kill you, and smear your blood on his eyes: let me take his goods." The servant wakened the prince and told him how he heard a voice, that he wanted to follow it, if the

prince would come after him. "Very good," said the prince, "lead the way." So the servant went in the direction from which the voice had come, and soon saw a man who seemed to be running away. He ran after him, and noticed that the fugitive suddenly disappeared into the earth. On going nearer, he saw that there was a great hole in the ground. In the meantime the prince had come up, and the servant said: "I am going to go down there; let a rope down and pull up whatever I tie on to it."

But when the servant had climbed down into the hole, he found whole rooms full of gold and silver with three maidens sitting in them, each more beautiful than the other. "Why have you come here?" they asked him; "all this belongs to the seven Divs. We belong to them too, and they brought each of us from a different part of the world. If they find you, they will eat you up." "Where are they, then?" asked the servant. "In that room." The servant went in, hewed the seven Divs to pieces and put their ears in a cloth. Then he took the maidens with him, bound them one after the other on to the rope, and the prince pulled them up. The servant collected all the gold and silver and everything he could find, tied it all on to the rope, and the prince pulled it up. Everything the Divs possessed they had taken from those who had travelled by the shorter way, and the travellers themselves they had killed.

When he had sent up everything, the servant tied the rope round himself and let himself be drawn up. Then the whole party set out on the homeward way after they had loaded their camels with the newly-found treasure and with the three maidens.

When he arrived home, the prince found that his father had gone blind and his sister mad. All that had

come to pass because those who stayed at home had been told that their youngest son and brother had chosen the shorter way, and that they might therefore regard him as lost. The father's eyes had lost their sight from incessant weeping, and from the heavy anxiety his sister's mind had given way.

After a time, however, the servant asked the prince to go hunting with him. They wandered about the whole day, but could find nothing. When they were on the way home in the depth of night, the servant killed the hound, took out his handkerchief and dipped it in the animal's blood. Then he said to the prince: "Do not be sad on account of the dog. What has happened, has happened; a misfortune is soon over." The prince said nothing out of love for his servant, and they went on homewards.

Two or three days later the servant came to his master and said: "My time is nearly up. You three brothers must now marry the three maidens we pulled out of the Divs' pit." And so it was. The eldest son took the eldest maiden, the second son the second maid, and the youngest the youngest.

Shortly after that, the year for which the servant had engaged himself to the prince came to an end. The prince urged him to stay, but the servant would not agree, took his wages, and said: "Come, we will go for a walk, for I want to tell you something." They set out, and the servant turned towards the graveyard where before the man had insulted the grave. As they drew near they saw that light was shining out of the grave: it was a fresh grave, newly dug. The servant stepped into it with the words, "I will see if it fits me," laid himself down, and it fitted him exactly. The prince even said, "It looks as if that grave had been meant for you." "Give me your hand and help me out," said

the servant, and when the prince stretched out his hand the servant laid in it his seventy-rouble wage and the blood-stained handkerchief, saying: "Smear the blood on your father's eyes; boil the Divs' ears in water and give it to your sister to drink; then your father will recover his sight, and your sister her reason. Your father shall vacate the throne for you." And as he said that, his grave closed over him.

The prince mourned his servant and went sadly home. But he carried out his servant's orders; his father's eyes received back their sight, and his sister's reason was restored to her. And then the old king gave up the throne and his youngest son took it in his place, and reigned for the good of his people.

18. THE RED FISH

THIS is a fairy tale. There was once upon a time a king who had become blind from old age. The doctors told him that in the White Sea there was a brightly-coloured fish with a horn on its head, called the "Red Fish." If it were caught and its blood smeared on the king's eyes, he would recover his sight. The king ordered his son to go with the fishermen to catch this fish; the prince gathered the fishermen together and they set out.

For two whole days they cast their nets in vain, it was on the third day that they caught the Red Fish. But it was so beautiful that they could not bring themselves to kill it, and so they threw it back into the sea. But the king's son made the fishermen take a solemn vow not to say anything about their catch. Then they returned home.

Now it happened one day that the prince had occasion to beat a negro, one of his father's servants. And the negro ran straight to his master and told him the whole story of the Red Fish. The king was very angry and banished his son from his kingdom. When he said farewell to his mother, she said to him: "If a man follows you on the road, stand still and wait; if he comes right up to you, take him as your companion; if, at dinner, he gives you more than he takes himself, then make friends with him; if he takes upon him to watch at nights while you sleep, pretend at first to go to sleep, then if he really remains awake, be his friend."

Then the king's son said farewell to his mother and went abroad. On the way he saw a man he did not know coming towards him; he did as his mother had told him, and the strange man stayed some distance off. They spent the night in an open field—the king's son pretended to be asleep, but the strange man stayed awake and kept watch the whole night through. In the morning as they were having breakfast the stranger put more before the king's son than he took himself, so that the prince said to himself, "Out of this stranger I will make a good friend."

Soon they came to a town where they lodged with an old woman. "What is the news in your town?" they asked her.

"News is it? Our king has one daughter, she spoke up till her seventh year, but since then she has been dumb. The king has vowed to give her as wife to who-soever can make her speak. But he who tries and does not succeed, his head will be cut off. Many have tried it already—a whole house has been built of their skulls." When the king's son and his friend heard of this they determined to try their luck.

A great crowd assembled in the court of the king's palace to witness the attempt. The friend of the king's son told them to make no answer to three questions he would ask them. Then they all went into the room in which the king's daughter sat behind a curtain. The friend of the king's son began to tell a story.

"Once upon a time a tailor was making a journey. A carpenter joined him on the way, and further on a mullah. They spent the night in a dark wood. The carpenter took the first watch. When he began to get sleepy he took up a piece of wood and carved the figure of a boy out of it. The tailor had the second watch; when he began to get sleepy, he began to make clothes for the wooden figure, in which he dressed it. The mullah took the third watch. When he saw the wooden figure of a boy, and saw that he was fully dressed, he implored God to send the boy a soul. The Almighty heard his prayer, and the wooden figure became a living boy. But in the morning the three began to quarrel; each of them claimed the boy. 'He belongs to me,' said the carpenter. 'No, to me,' cried the tailor. 'What are you thinking of? The boy is mine!' said the mullah. Now, good people, what do you think? You who are gathered together here, tell me, to which of these three should the boy belong?"

But no one answered; even when the teller repeated his question, everyone still remained silent. Only the king's daughter could not stand it any longer. "Why do you not answer?" she cried behind her curtain. "The boy belongs, of course, to the mullah!" Immediately the whole people sprang joyfully to their feet—"Good! She has spoken," they all shouted together. And the king gave the prince his daughter to wife.

At night when the bridegroom was about to go to

his bride, his companion told him not to lock his door. And when the young couple were sleeping, the friend went in and saw that an enormous serpent was crawling into the room. He killed it with his diamond sword, and when day came everyone saw what had happened through the night.

Ten days later the son-in-law left the palace for his own home. The king gave him ten servants and gave his daughter ten slave-women as well as ten camels with ten loads of costly goods.

When they came to the place where the stranger had attached himself to the king's son, the stranger said to him: "Now we must divide everything between us." The king's son was well pleased with this arrangement and they divided everything, the goods, the servants, the slaves. Only the king's daughter remained. "We must split her in two," said the friend. "No, no, do not kill her! Rather take her altogether," said the king's son. But in vain: the other refused to hear of it. So they bound the king's daughter to a tree, the friend drew his diamond sword and pretended he was going to split her head. But she was so terrified that she became sick and . . . little snakes came crawling out of her mouth. The stranger swung his sword a second and a third time and then unbound the king's daughter.

"A serpent fell in love with her," he then said to the king's son, "and slept beside her every night. The king's daughter became dumb from breathing the serpent's breath and was about to give birth to these little serpents. Now I must leave you. I present you with my share. Your father is blind; take a little earth from the hoof of my horse, smear it on his eyes, and the light will return to them. You will not see me again.

I am the fish you would not allow to be killed." He had hardly spoken when he had already vanished.

But the king's son went home with all that he had, with servants, slaves, camels, costly goods and his young wife. He smeared his father's eyes with earth from the hoof of his friend's horse, and at once they received back their sight.

And now . . . our fairy tale is done.

19. SARTANKI

THERE was once, there was once, there was once a king, and he had a son. Now this prince went with his servants one day to the hunt. And when a stag crossed over in front of them, the prince made after it as fast as his horse could carry him. But one by one the servants fell behind. Suddenly the stag disappeared into a cave. As it had grown dark by this time the prince lay down to sleep. While he slept the stag stole softly out of the cave, and laid sugar and straw in the rim of the prince's hat. In the morning the prince got up, mounted his horse and set out home. He met his servants one after the other; they all rode homewards together, but when they got there the prince was suddenly taken ill and had to go to bed.

He was so very ill that after a little time it seemed he was going to die. It was in vain that his father brought doctors from far and near, no one could cure him. When the prince felt that his end was near, he begged his father to let him be carried to the bazaar. So he was laid on his bed, covered with a coverlet of silk from Schemache, and carried to the shore of a little

lake beside the bazaar.¹ As he lay there, an old bald-headed man passed by, looked at the prince and said: "Look! that is he who has fallen so deeply in love with Sartanki!"

The prince's attendants asked the old man if he could not cure the prince. "Certainly I can," he answered, "what should prevent me?" The servants at once ran to tell the king the joyful news. He had the old man brought to him and asked him how he intended to begin to cure the prince. "First of all, look at the straw and the sugar in the brim of the prince's hat," said the old man. The servants went to look and were not a little surprised when the articles mentioned were found. The king then asked the old man what was to be done next. "If you marry him to Sartanki, he will be cured," was the answer. "If not, then he will die. Give me those things which I will ask of you and then let the prince come with me: I will take him to her whom he loves." The king ordered that the things he asked for should be given to him; Bald-pate took them and disappeared. After a week had passed he came again, with two horses: he mounted one of them himself, the prince leapt on the other, and they rode away together. And so they rode till they came to the shore of a certain sea. "What are we to do now?" asked the prince. "How are we to get across?" "Do not disturb yourself," answered Bald-pate, who pulled out a net and gave it to the prince. "Put that over your eyes, prince," he said, "we are going to ride through seven seas. On the bottom of these seas you will notice many beautiful things, pearls, diamonds, corals, gold and silver. But touch nothing! Let everything remain as it is."

¹ In Kumuch, where this story was told me, there is in fact a large pond in the vicinity of the bazaar.

So they crossed the first sea, and the second, and the third, the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh, which was the last. Then Bald-pate took the net from the prince's eyes and put it back in his pocket. They went on further and further till they came to a town, where they lodged with an old woman.

"Will you take us God-sent guests into your house?" asked Bald-pate. "If you are sent from God," she replied, "then may I serve as a sacrifice to you. Why should I not receive you? But I have nothing to eat or drink. All that I can give you is an empty room. If that will serve you, then come in."

Bald-pate put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a handful of gold which he gave to the woman. Ah! how overjoyed she was! How she sprang about the room! And then she led her guests to another room which was handsomely furnished, and served them with such a great dish of pilaw that they could not see over the top of it. After they had eaten, Bald-pate called to her: "Well, old woman, what is the news of your town? Is there justice and order here?"

"Both of these," she replied, "but there is one thing that is not good. Our king has one daughter, Sartanki; she can change herself into any kind of creature that suits her, but she will not marry."

"Can you take us to her?" asked Bald-pate.

"Why not?" said the old woman. "I go to her every day, to comb and dress her hair."

Then Bald-pate pulled another handful of gold out of his pocket and gave it to the old woman, who knew at once after that how to arrange matters. "To-morrow morning," she said to the prince, "I must go to the princess. Take a golden samovar on your shoulder and follow me. And when you arrive in

front of the castle, call out your samovar as if you were a dealer."

And so it all happened. The old woman went to the castle and combed and dressed the princess's hair, the king's son came with the golden samovar and offered it for sale before the castle. When the old woman heard his voice, she looked out of the window and called the princess to her. "Look, Sartanki, look at that youth down there, see how handsome he is! What a pity it would be if you did not get him! If someone else took him for a husband!" Then the princess gave orders that the young man should be called up, and he had hardly come into the room before she recognised him as the huntsman who had driven her into a cave when she had changed herself into a stag. The old woman at once disappeared from the room.

"Listen," said the king's son to the princess, who was lying in his arms. "Your father will certainly not give you willingly to me as my wife. The best thing we can do is to run away." The maiden agreed to this, and after a time begged her father's permission to go away for three days' hunting. The father had no objection to that; she met her lover and Bald-pate in the wood in which she had announced she was going to hunt, and all three rode off on the prince's trusty steeds towards his home.

But when the three days were up and the princess did not return home, her father began to be suspicious. He looked first in her room; it was locked, and when it was broken open it was found to be empty.

"That old woman is probably at the bottom of this!" said the king; he summoned her to him and asked her if she knew where his daughter was. The old woman pretended to know nothing, and only when the king got out

his riding-whip and struck her black and blue did she confess the truth. The king was in a great rage and determined he would not leave one stone of the kidnapper's town standing on another. He assembled his army and set out to bring back his daughter and to slay the king's son and all his house.

In the meantime the king's son with his bride and Bald-pate had drawn near to his native town. On the way they met an old man who was walking up and down, laughing and crying by turns. "What is the meaning of this?" asked the king's son; "why are you walking up and down, laughing and crying?"

"Sir," he replied, "the son of our king has died in foreign lands and this is the day set apart to honour his memory. I weep because our prince is dead, and then I laugh when I think of the gifts that are to be given away."

"Well, well," said the king's son. "I am he who is reported to be dead. Now run to the castle and tell my father that I am alive and coming to him. Run quickly and he will give you a good reward."

The old man did not wait to be told twice, but ran as hard as he could with the good news. The king went out with all his viziers and ministers to meet his son, and arranged a splendid wedding for him and Sartanki. But when, in a little time, the bride's father approached with his army, the king sent him a message that there was no need to declare war, he had married his son to Sartanki according to the commands of Islam, and if he cared he might attend as a guest. And so it happened; he stayed for three days in his daughter's house, and then in a friendly and happy spirit said his farewells and went home to his own country.

20. TO WHOM DOES THE BRIDE BELONG?

LONG, long ago, there lived in Tiflis a certain merchant. He had a daughter, Mariat by name. She was a very beautiful, very clever and very learned maiden. Her father made up his mind that he would only give her as wife to whosoever could produce a very special work of art. And the fame of the maiden and of this resolve of her father's spread over all the world.

Now in Erzerum there lived a man, who, when he put his hand before his eyes and lay down, could see everything that was going on over the whole world. And in the town of Buchara there lived a man who had a gun which never missed the object it was aimed at. And in Afghanistan there lived a man who made various wooden articles: when one sat down on them, one could travel a distance that would ordinarily take a month, in one hour.

All these three men determined to attempt to win the merchant's daughter. They came to Tiflis and asked for her hand.

"Yes, yes!" said the merchant. "But the matter is not so easy as all that. I must know first of all what you can do."

"I can see everything that is happening in the world," answered the man from Erzerum.

"I have a gun which never misses its aim," said the man from Buchara.

"And I can carve things out of wood, with which one can make a journey of a month's duration in one hour," added he from Afghanistan.

"Thank you," said the merchant; "I see I must not send any of you away without further considera-

tion. Just let me think to which of you I will give my daughter."

"Good," the three replied: "we will await your decision."

Next morning the merchant came to the three candidates and informed them that his daughter had disappeared in the night, leaving no trace. "Now is the time to show your skill," he added, "make ready to search for her and bring her back to me."

They looked at each other. "You," one of them said to the man from Erzerum, "look and see where she is." He lay down at once, put his hand to his eyes, looked and then spoke: "There is an island in the Black Sea; on that island is a stronghold of the djinns; the maiden sits in that stronghold, a prisoner."

"I will be there at once," said the Afghan; and he from Buchara added, "I will go with you and bring her back, even if it costs me my life."

The Afghan made himself something to ride on, sat down on it and took the man from Buchara with him. Soon they were on the djinns' island, and the man from Buchara shot the djinns one after the other with his gun which could not miss its target. Then they took the maiden and brought her back to her father.

But then a quarrel arose between the three. Each of them wanted to have the maiden, because each of them had a right to her.

"If I had not seen her . . ." said he from Erzerum.

"If I had not made the carriage . . ." said the Afghan; and "If I had not shot the djinns . . ." said he from Buchara.

And so they quarrelled.

21. BRAVE NÄSNI

THERE was once a man called Näsni. He was so timid that he hardly dared to go outside the house, and when a fly flew past he would crawl under his bed-cover. But once when he had to go out, he did not forget to take his sabre with him, and he made such tremendous passes in the air with it that he accidentally killed three flies. He was so proud of this that he had the following inscription engraved on his sabre: "This is the sabre of Näsni with which he slew sixty-three Narts¹ from Erchustoj." Then he girt on his sabre, took a bag of flour on his back and set out on his travels.

Who knows how far he travelled? He went on, at any rate, till he came to a pear tree standing in a ravine; there he stopped, dug his sack of flour into the ground, and lay down to sleep. But all at once seven brothers of the Erchustojer Narts seemed suddenly to have sprung out of the earth and to stand a little distance away from him. They were wondering among themselves who this stranger could possibly be who had dared to penetrate into their country—for when a bird even flew over any of their lands it threw down a feather as a toll, and every four-footed animal passing through left a hoof or a paw. Then the youngest of the Narts crept softly up to the sleeping man, looked at his sabre, and then, returning to his brothers, told them of the inscription on it: "This is the sabre of Näsni with which he slew sixty-three Erchustojer Narts."

At that moment Näsni woke up. He saw the seven giants coming towards him and heard them say he must show them his powers. He showed them his sabre,

¹ See note on the Narts, p. ix.

and stamped his foot heavily on the place where he had buried his sack of flour so that a great cloud of flour rose in the air. "Look at that! That is what I am! When I even tread on the earth, great clouds of dust rise up." Then the Narts asked him to stay and live with them, for they had never seen such a man as he was, they would give him their sister as wife and half of all their possessions. Näsni did not dare to refuse this offer, and went with them. They built him a house, gave him their sister to wife, and Näsni lived with the Narts.

But presently a rhinoceros¹ appeared in the wood: from time to time it came into the village and ate the people. The Narts determined to make war on this monster and sent for Näsni, asking him to come with them. But that did not suit him at all, and their messenger came back with the message that Näsni had no intention of going with them on the hunt. But . . . his wife forced her husband to go; she simply drove him out of the house. Näsni ran into the wood and climbed up a great pear tree, to hide himself there. But to his dismay the rhinoceros spent the night right under this tree. The Erchustojer Narts, thinking that Näsni had already gone to the hunt, went themselves to the wood, met the rhinoceros and wounded it. The beast ran to its lair under the pear tree on which Näsni was still sitting. This hero fainted from terror, fell down right on the back of the rhinoceros, came to his senses again and held fast to the animal's hair. The rhinoceros was frightened too when it felt this unusual movement on its back, and rushed away straight to the village where the Narts lived. They took their weapons and shot it dead. Näsni behaved as if he was indignant at that. He cried, "Why

¹ This is the translation Gren gives for *bira-nal*. I cannot determine now whether the translation is correct or not.

have you killed it? It would have been more intelligent if you had noticed how I had tamed it." And the Narts believed he had really told the truth.

Some time later an enemy force came and wanted to fight with the Narts. They sent for Näsni again, and again the messenger came back with a refusal. But his wife fetched herself a big stick and drove her husband out of the house. Näsni went to the Narts' drove of horses, to seek the quietest animal he could find, and make good his escape on it. But none of the horses would let him come near them, they all kicked out at him. At last he did find an old mare, hobbled by the feet. He pricked her flanks with two little sticks, she stood it and did not stir. "This is my chance!" cried Näsni, got upon her back and rode away, but not in the direction of the enemy. When the Narts heard of it, they thought, "Ah! he is playing the same game as with the rhinoceros. He will come in good time," and so in this belief they closed with the enemy. But when Näsni's mare heard the shooting, she was a changed creature. She turned round like a shot and set off at full speed in the direction of the fighting.

Näsni had long since lost all control of her. In his fright he caught hold of the branches of a big plane tree, but the mare was galloping at such a rate that the whole tree came away in Näsni's hands. And the mare tore right into the heat of the battle, trampled the enemy with her hoofs, and all that were left Näsni struck with his plane tree or the Narts killed. When it was all over, the Narts took Näsni's mare by the bridle and led it home with songs of victory. Then they made Näsni their chief and he lives with them to this day.

22. THE FATHER'S BEQUEST

IN a village numbering twenty-five thousand souls there lived a man called Tschnara, of the race of the Nelbi. He was so poor that he nearly died of hunger. One day he said to his mother: "I have neither a horse to ride, nor decent clothes to wear, nor weapons to put on. Whoever put me into the world must have been poor indeed, I shall never rise out of my misery."

"That is not so," his mother replied. "Your father was not poor. He left a horse that has stood these fifteen years in a dark stall, feeding itself on stones and iron. It is very wild, but if you have courage enough to saddle it, then it belongs to you. There is a coat of mail there too, so heavy that it takes fifteen maidens to lift it; that also belongs to you if you can carry it. And there is a dagger too, take it if you can handle it."

Tschnara fetched his father's horse out of its stall and saddled it. He put on the coat of mail quite easily, girt on his dagger, mounted his horse, leapt over three hedges and rode out into the wide world. He rode for a long, long time before he saw anybody. And then it was the seven Nart brothers, the Erchustojer, who lay in a deep sleep at the side of the road. As Tschnara rode past them, their horses said to his horse, "Whither away with such violence that you furrow the earth like a plough and throw it up in heaps like a mole? If we were not afraid to waken our masters, this day would be your last."

"And I, if I had not such a far distance before me, I would wipe you off the surface of the earth like dew from grass," answered Tschnara's horse and stormed on.

Tschnara rode far perhaps, or not so far, who can tell?

But at last he came to a big town. He gave his horse its head that it might find for itself a house in which they would be well received. At the other end of the town a house stood by itself in which there lived a widow. The horse turned its steps towards the court of this house. The widow received her unknown guests gladly, and Tschnara, who was very tired, laid himself down to sleep. In the middle of the night he saw lightning as if the whole heavens were lit up. He told the widow about it next morning, and she said there was lightning every time the king's daughter turned round in her sleep. When he heard further from the widow that the king's daughter was very beautiful, he sent her to the king, charging her to ask in his name for the hand of the princess. The widow discharged his commission, and was told by the king that he could not enter into any negotiations about his daughter, because a king's son with a hundred and twenty cavaliers was on his way to attempt to take possession of the princess by force. When Tschnara heard that, he jumped on his horse and rode out to meet the king's son. He had hardly caught sight of Tschnara when he asked his retinue in a voice of alarm: "What is that coming towards us?" "You see before you Tschnara of the race of Nelbi, to whom even a bird flying over their territory throws down a feather as toll, a four-footed animal a hoof. Who I am further than that, you will immediately see." Tschnara had no sooner spoken than he gave his horse a blow with his whip, and attacked the troop. His horse trampled those who fell under its hoofs, and whosoever Tschnara's dagger flashed over lost his life.

He struck them all down, then turned back into the town and sent the widow again to the king to tell him that the same fate awaited him which had just overtaken

the king's son and his retinue, if he did not at once give up his daughter to Tschnara. The king hastened to give his consent, and Tschnara put his beautiful wife in a waggon and drove her home. On the way he again encountered the Erchustojer Narts. They deceived him by assuring him they were his best friends. And so it came about that Tschnara went to them unarmed. The seven giants took advantage of that; they got into his waggon and went off with his bride. But Tschnara's horse accidentally became loosed from the waggon to which it was harnessed; ¹ Tschnara called it to him and sped after the giants. But when he came up to them he did not know what to do, for he had no weapon. Now his bride came to his aid; when she saw her opportunity, she threw him his dagger. Hardly had he clutched it when the heads of the giants flew from their shoulders.

Tschnara reached his home without further adventure. There he was married, but on the night after the wedding his bride was stolen away. Nobody knew who the thief was. Both windows and doors of the bridal chamber had been locked. Tschnara broke out into bitter weeping, and when he had no more tears he wept tears of blood. But weeping was of no avail. And so he set out on the search. He wandered far, far away, and one day he met a shepherd by the side of the road. He spent his time by running up a hill, and then running down it again. As he went up he laughed, as he came down he wept. Tschnara noticed the curious behaviour of the shepherd; he rode up to him and asked him what he was doing. "I weep when I come down from the hill because I am sorry for Tschnara of the race of Nelbi; I laugh as I go up because I get meat and bread at home."

¹ This whole episode of the waggon is a later addition. The Caucasians had no waggons, and never harnessed horses to their *arben* or two-wheeled carts.

"Have you any idea who robbed Tschnara of his bride?" asked Tschnara, "or where the robber lives?"

"Yes, I do know that. He is a Nogai-ian¹ from a village near here."

Tschnara now told the shepherd who he was, and asked him for advice how to get his wife out of the clutches of the Nogai-ians.

"I will tell you that," said the shepherd. "You must go about it this way. The Nogai-ian will sleep beside your wife to-night for the first time. Put on my clothes, hide your dagger under them, and go into that village to-night with my calves. They will lead you to the courtyard of the Nogai-ian. There you will be given bread and meat. Then you must ask him to allow you to take these gifts" (the bread and meat) "to his wife, as you want to wish her happiness. He will let you do that. The rest you must manage for yourself."

Tschnara did exactly as the shepherd had advised him. And he contrived to await the coming of the Nogai-ian in his wife's room. When night fell he had not long to wait. The Nogai-ian came in, and the first thing he did was to boast to his wife of the skill with which he carried out his thefts. "I steal children out of their mothers' arms without their noticing it: I steal young wives away from the side of their husbands."

"I believe you there," Tschnara's wife answered, "but no one can wield the dagger so skilfully as he from whom you stole me."

The Nogai-ian was furious at this retort, called her a dog, struck her with his whip, and called Tschnara a coward. But at that moment Tschnara sprang out and struck off the Nogai-ian's head with one blow. Then he

¹ The Nogai-ians were a Tatar people who lived near the Tchetchens and the Circassians.

took everything the dead man had possessed, gave a portion of it to the shepherd, and returned to his own home with his wife.

23. THE COURAGEOUS DAUGHTER

AN old nobleman had three daughters but no sons. One day it occurred to him that he might test the courage of his daughters. To this end he ordered the eldest to dress herself in men's clothes, to mount a horse and set out to seek adventure. But he himself lurked under a bridge she had to cross. As she rode over it, he sprang out and pretended he was about to seize her; she was so frightened that she swooned and fell from her horse.

The following day he sent his second daughter out. He waited for her too, and as he seized her, her horse took fright and she fell, like her sister, in a swoon.

Then he sent his youngest daughter. Again he lay in wait under the bridge, sprang out suddenly and seized her. The horse was frightened and shied to the side, but the rider held it in with a firm hand and gave her assailant such a blow with her riding-whip that it cost him his little finger. In spite of the pain her father rejoiced in her courage, let her go and returned home himself. After she had crossed the bridge the maiden rode straight on. Whether she travelled far or not—who knows? But at last she came to a town.

"What is the news here?" she asked the first person she met.

"Only this," she was answered, "that our Chan wishes to set free, for his son, a certain maiden who is watched over by many spirits. No one can be found to undertake this task."

But the unknown knight pleased all the people so much by his bearing (she was dressed, remember, like a man), that they asked him to attempt to set the maiden free. And after many requests the unknown horseman agreed.

She set out on her search. On the way she passed over a burning plain, where she found three young serpents trying to escape from the flames. She lifted them up with her riding-switch and so saved them. When she had left the burning plain behind, she set the little creatures down on the ground and rode after them without allowing herself to lose sight of them. The serpents crawled towards a *kurgan* (a great artificial burial mound). As they drew near it, it opened up, and the maiden went in after the serpents. Now the mound housed a good spirit, the mother of the three young serpents. "I have three young ones every year," she said, "but I always lose them through the burning of the plain. Had you not been there, I had lost these three also. There is nothing I would not do for you. Tell me, what do you want?"

"For myself I want nothing. But I am looking for a certain maiden. Help me to find her."

"That is not difficult," answered the mother of the young serpents, "only you will never get there on that horse. Take this black horse rather. When you come to the place, hide yourself behind the house and lie in wait till the maiden goes out. Then leap with your horse over the hedge, and when he kneels down, seize the maiden and ride—as hard as you can. No one will overtake you, and you can return home in safety."

So the maiden mounted the black steed and set out. She did everything as she had been told; in spite of all the shouts of the watchmen, she brought the stolen

maiden safely away. When she got to the town of the Chan for whom she had undertaken this task, the maiden said to her: "I will only sign the marriage deeds if the box with seven locks is brought to me which is wrapped up in a dog-skin in a secret room." And so our heroine turned again to the mother of the serpents for advice. "If you want to carry out this task," she said, "then you must ride there on a grey horse. When you come near the house, walk like a dog and no one will disturb you. When you go into the house, touch the doors with this little stick; they will then open of themselves, and when you seize the dog-skin it also will open of itself. Then take the box and ride back."

The heroine did all this as she was told. But still the bride, although she now had her box, would hear nothing of marriage. "There dwell in the sea," she said, "a buffalo ox and seven buffalo cows. Bring them here to me and milk the cows. Then boil the milk and pour it hot into a trough. I will jump in from one side and swim through it, while he who wants to marry me must jump in at the other side. If he also swims through, then I agree to marry him; but if not, then I refuse."

Our heroine set out on her travels once more. The mother of the serpents said to her: "Take a dun horse this time and ride to the sea-shore. When you get there roll yourself and your horse in the black sand, then ride into the sea. Wherever the buffalo may be, your dun horse will find them. Only take care not to fall from your horse when the buffalo attacks you." The heroine carried out all these directions faithfully. The buffalo seized her, but she drove it to the shore. Then it cursed her—and the curse of a buffalo is always fulfilled. "Whosoever drives us out of the sea shall become a woman if he is a man, and a man if she is a woman," he

bellowed. And in truth our heroine changed at that moment into a man. And when he had driven the buffalo cows home, he had them milked and the milk heated. It was poured into a trough, the bride threw herself into it from one side, the son of the Chan from the other. He was boiled to pieces in the hot milk and his body had to be fished out. But the bride swam through.

"The Chan's son is dead," cried all the people. "He who fetched the bride shall have her now."

And so it happened, and they lived happily and contented ever after.

24. THE STEP-DAUGHTER

THERE was once an old man who married again after the death of his wife. His second wife bore him a daughter, and he had already one by his first wife. But his second wife hated her step-daughter with her whole heart, and she gave her husband no peace till he put his first daughter in an empty house in a wood, that she might be devoured by wild beasts.

There the maiden sat quite alone. When night fell she put a little meal into a pot she had brought with her, to make herself some porridge. Then a mouse came out of a hole and asked her for a little meal. The maiden gave it some, and the mouse ate it up. When it was satisfied, it said to the maiden: "A bear will come here to-night. He will give you a little bell, and will say to you: 'Take the little bell and run three times round the house; if I cannot catch you, you shall get a silver waggon from me, with three horses. But if I do catch you, then I will eat you up.' You must agree, and take the little bell. Then I will come out and you will give it

to me. I will run three times round the house, but you must climb up on the roof and wait calmly for what will happen next."

And sure enough, at midnight the bear came with the little bell. "Hullo! maiden," he said, "take this bell, ring it and run three times round the house. If I do not catch you, then I will give you a silver waggon with three horses. But if I do catch you, I will eat you up."

"Very good," said the maiden, took the bell, ran out, and gave it to the mouse. The mouse ran three times round the house with it, then gave it back to the maiden and slipped back into its hole. "You have won," said the bear, and gave her what he had promised.

Some time later the maiden's step-mother said to her husband: "Go to the wood and bring back the bones of your daughter." So the old man went away to the wood. In his absence his old house-dog began to speak: "Our old master is coming back with his daughter," he said. "They sit in a silver waggon drawn by a team of three horses. I hear the tinkle of the bells." The step-mother asked him angrily: "What bells? That will be the bones of his daughter knocking together! Bad luck to you!" And she struck the dog and drove him out. But after a few moments he came again to announce that his old master had arrived, and that he was really sitting beside his daughter in a silver carriage. From rage and anger the step-mother knocked out one of her own eyes. But soon she ordered her husband to take *her* daughter also to the wood, that she too might get a silver carriage. So the old man took his second daughter out in the wood and left her alone in the house. The mouse came out again and begged for something to eat. But the maiden was hard-hearted, struck the mouse on the head and drove it away. At midnight the bear

arrived with the little bell, but this time there was no mouse there, the maiden had not even taken one step when the bear caught her and ate her up.

The following morning the wicked woman drove her husband again into the wood: "Go and bring back my daughter and her silver carriage." The old man searched and searched, but found nothing but the bones of her daughter; he put them in a sack and set out for home. When he was still a long way off the dog heard him coming and, running to the woman, said to her: "The bones of your daughter are coming!" "What? bones?" roared the woman. "It is a silver carriage!" As she spoke she struck the dog a heavy blow and drove him out of the house. But the dog was right. The old man came in, bringing nothing with him but a sack full of bones. The woman was so enraged that she knocked out her other eye. And from that time her life was a burden to her. But the old man lived happily with his daughter.

25. THE MAGIC ANIMALS AND THE MAGIC CUDGEL

THERE was once upon a time a poor couple—old, old people whose only possession was one solitary hen. One day they made up their minds to kill the hen, but after they had caught it, it laid a golden egg. "Why should we kill the creature, if it lays us every day a golden egg?" they said to each other, and let the hen go. But when they wanted to catch it the following day, it had disappeared. Then the old man took his staff and went out to search for it. "I will not come home without the hen," he said to his wife. He wandered about for a long time—a fairy tale is soon told, but it takes a long time to happen

—at last he came to the hut of a very old woman. He told her about his hen, and asked her if she had not seen it. "No, I have not seen it, but I will give you a horse instead; if you neigh to it, it will give you any dish you like to ask for." And with these words she gave him a pitiful-looking old horse. With great difficulty the old man clambered up on its back, and set out for home. As he rode through a certain place the people laughed at him because of his miserable nag. "Laugh as much as you like," he said, "only do not neigh. For if you neigh you can have anything you wish to eat." Nobody believed him, the young people only laughed the more, and began to neigh for fun. But all at once the greatest variety of dishes were there, so many that the whole village was able to eat its fill. The old man was asked with great respect to come into the guest-room, and when he lay down to rest they changed his horse for another, as miserable looking as the first. Now when the old man had rested sufficiently he hurried home to his wife, without noticing that he was riding another horse. When he arrived he wanted to show his wife the performance at once, but however much he neighed, the horse gave nothing. Then the man took the beast back to the old woman who had given it to him, and reproached her with having deceived him.

"No, I did not deceive you," she said; "but now I give you a goat instead. When you say 'Mää-ä,' gold pieces will fall out of its mouth and its nose." The old man took the goat, set out on his way home, but soon came to the place where his horse had been changed while he slept. They played the same trick with the goat, and when the old man got home and wanted to show his wife the goat's wonderful powers, all his mä-ä-ä-ing

was of no avail. The goat produced no gold. "What a godless woman that must be!" said the old man. "Why does she always deceive me?" And he went back to her and reproached her bitterly. In order to get rid of him she gave him a cudgel and said: "There is a cudgel for you; if anyone does you a wrong, say, 'dom, dom,' and the cudgel will beat those who have wronged you till you tell it to stop or till they do what you ask them." Armed with the cudgel, the old man went straight to the place where his horse and his goat had been stolen from him. When the people gathered round him again, he warned them: "Take care," he said, "do not say 'dom, dom' to my cudgel, or it will beat you!" But no one believed him, and in order to make fun of him they said the magic word. At once the cudgel flew among them, and began to beat them furiously, till they begged the old man to tell it to stop and they would restore his horse and his goat to him. When he had got them back again, he ordered his cudgel to stop. And then he set out for home with his horse, his goat, and his cudgel, and lived happily and peacefully ever after with his old wife.

26. THE BEAUTIFUL HELENA

THERE stood, by the sea-shore, a fortified town whose ruler, Prince Sane, was a handsome, well-built youth of quick understanding and heroic physical powers. When he came of age, the wise men of the town made up their minds he must marry and told him of their decision. Sane had no objection, but . . . there was no suitable bride. So he ordered his horse to be saddled, flung on his armour, and travelled into the neigh-

bouring kingdom to seek for a bride. He went from one country to another; he looked in the castles of the kings and in the cottages of the peasants; he sent others also to search for him, but all in vain. He did not find her whom he sought. But at last, in a far distant land, he found in a castle where he was staying a maiden who was so beautiful there was no one like her in the whole world. She was called Helena. Hardly had he seen her before he fell passionately in love with her. He asked her if she would be his wife and she agreed. After the wedding he took his young wife back to his own home. When they arrived Sane invited his friends and relations to a great feast. Day after day passed in festivities. The young couple did not notice that two weeks had already passed in this way. Now there was a custom in that country that every young husband must leave his wife after a fortnight to go away and travel for a whole year in distant parts.¹

And Sane, too, had to observe this custom however hard it was for him. A month or perhaps two months after his departure, a merchant from Schahar,² a town near Stamboul, came to Sane's town. He was unusually handsome. He produced wares the like of which had never been seen there before — silk, costly goblets and precious stones. When he had unloaded all his goods, he inquired where he could obtain a lodging. He was directed to the house of the prince. He went there and was announced to the princess, who allowed him to stay in her house as a guest. She sent him this message: "The prince is not at home, to be sure, but

¹ This custom is still observed by certain Caucasian and Circassian peoples. It is also customary that until the birth of the first son, or at least at the beginning of married life, the young husband only visits his wife secretly.

² *Schahar* is the Persian for town.

his house is here and his gates are open to every guest. You are welcome." The merchant brought his wares, spread them out for sale, and the people crowded in to admire his treasures. But over the whole town there was more talk of the handsome merchant than even of his beautiful things. The princess herself could not remain unaffected by the courtesy and grace of her guest. She invited him to her own rooms, asked him about foreign lands, and found entertainment in his conversation.

The merchant, on his side, found himself much attracted by the lonely lady. He spent all his spare time with her, and it is not surprising that by his good looks and his flattering speeches he gradually won her affection. They became more and more intimate, and it is to be feared she was unfaithful to her marriage vows. Six months had already passed since the stranger came to the prince's house, but the two lovers did not notice how time fled, and how the day gradually drew nearer when the prince must return. They awaited that time with fear and trembling; the merchant told Helena that he could not live without her, and she shared his feelings. They thought in vain of how they could arrange things so that they would not need to part. . . . They could think of no possible way. But though they failed, one of the princess's waiting-women thought of a plan. Once when she was busy making the stranger's bed, she noticed that he who before had always been so gay was now sunk in deep thought, and instead of talking to her, stood silent.

"What is wrong, dear guest?" she asked him; "why are you so sad, and why do you hang your head?"

"You know quite well," the merchant answered. "You know how deeply I love the princess, how I cannot live without her. Help me!" The waiting-woman

thought it over for a time and then said anxiously, "But how could I help you, and what would happen to me when the prince comes home?"

"Only help me, my dear! I will give you everything I possess—jewels and all kinds of rich materials."

"But what use will your treasures be to me if the prince kills me?"

"I will arrange so that no one will find out that I have made you rich: I will have a pit dug in the courtyard and will put into it everything you are to get; from that pit I will have a secret passage made to your room. Then no one can suspect you."

The waiting-woman agreed to this, and promised to help him if he wanted to run away with the princess. They arranged that the merchant should wait in a boat at a certain place where the shore was screened by thick bushes. The princess's women would take her down there to bathe, he should appear there as if by accident and invite her to come out for a row with him. The rest depended on himself. . . .

On the day arranged the princess and her women went down to the shore, she undressed and stepped into the water. As she knew nothing of the plan made between the merchant and her waiting-woman, she gave herself up whole-heartedly to the delights of the water, when all of a sudden her lover appeared in his little boat. The princess was much alarmed and wanted to hasten ashore, but he held her there with flattering words: "Come, dearest Helena, let us glide about in the shade of the trees."

She consented to this and sat down in the boat, which then proceeded under sail, not to the wood by the shore, but out to the merchant's ship. Now for the first time she realised her lover's designs, but her heart only

hesitated a few moments between her home, her people, and her lover; then she threw herself into his arms.

The waiting-woman watched all this, but as she had talked it over with the merchant, she took good care not to call for help. She went home and locked herself into the princess's room. When she was asked how the princess was she replied that the princess was not well, and could not leave her own rooms. The food which was sent up for the princess she ate herself. In this way she succeeded in keeping the kidnapping of her mistress a secret for three days. But on the fourth day she raised a tremendous hue and cry, she wrung her hands, she struck her breast and cried out that her mistress had disappeared, perhaps she had run away with the stranger? Now for the first time everyone came to know that the princess was indeed gone. Many had seen the departure of the ship, but no one had taken much notice of it, for it was an everyday occurrence that ships arrived and set sail.

There was tremendous excitement, for the prince was expected home in a short time, and what could they say to him? At first no one would believe that their proud princess had run away with a stranger, they thought rather she must have lost her way. They searched everywhere on land and sea, but all in vain. Only after a long time did they realise why the princess had gone.

But at last the long-looked-for day dawned on which Sane was to return. All his faithful friends assembled to welcome him; they accompanied him into the guest-room and plied him with food and drink. But Sane had noticed at once that something was wrong, for instead of the cries of joy and the happy faces he had expected, he saw nothing but downcast, sorrowful

expressions. He feared that something was wrong, but custom forbade him to go first to the rooms of his wife, whither all his desires drew him. It was only at sundown that he could at last order his people to lead him to the rooms of his wife—but no one stirred.

Sane repeated his order, and . . . then he heard all that had happened. The news struck him like a flash of lightning, and without returning to his now desolate rooms, he determined to set out at once to search for his vanished wife.

He searched through every corner of his kingdom, but in vain. He was just about to return home when he remembered that his father's *atalyk* (i.e. tutor) lived in the neighbourhood.¹ He sought him out and found an old man full of years, who recognised him at once, greeted him respectfully and offered him hospitality. As they talked, Sane saw that the old man knew already of Helena's disappearance, and so he made up his mind to tell him at once of his fruitless search.

"That was quite useless, prince," said the old man, "you are looked upon as a clever man, but your intelligence does not seem to be so great as your courage. Why do you seek your wife in your own country? She could not hide herself there! Do not waste your time, but search on the other side of the sea. And keep your ears open wherever you go: the more beautiful a woman is, the more men speak of her. Seek for a whole year, for two years; you will certainly find her."

Sane understood, went home and made his prepara-

¹ The Circassians, Abkhasians and other Caucasian races were not in the habit of bringing up their children at home, but sent them to a tutor. It was only natural that a very intimate and lasting relationship grew up between pupil and guardian, who remained close friends for life and were always ready to be of service to each other.

tions, so that he could fetch Helena even from the bottom of the sea if necessary.

He fitted out a ship and sailed away. After a long voyage, his ship at last came in sight of mountains in the distance. Sane was rejoicing as to the news he might hear in this foreign land, when he saw a ship sailing towards his own. And on the deck of this ship stood a youth who looked like a beautiful maiden. But he was clad in a coat of mail, with a quiver over his shoulder, a bow in his hand and a sword by his side, while on his head gleamed a steel helmet. Sane, too, stood on the deck of his ship armed in the same way, but on his breast glistened the distinguishing mark of a prince. When the handsome youth saw by that badge that there was a prince on board, he quickly got into a boat and with a couple of strokes pulled over to Sane's ship. After they had greeted each other the youth asked the prince where he was going. He answered that he was travelling in order to get news he wanted. "If that is so," answered the youth, "why have you no friend, O prince, to share the dangers of the journey with you, and with whom you can wile away the time in talk? If you will, I will be your friend."

Sane gladly agreed to this, and sailed with his new friend to land. There they saw the walls of a town. They determined to enter it at once, and went through the gates unhindered. Then they turned to the left down the first cross-street, and went into the second house. There the prince told his new friend the object of his journey, how his wife had been stolen from him, and how he hoped to find her by constant asking and searching.

"You will not find her that way," said his friend. "It would be better if you disguised yourself as a beggar.

Then you could go everywhere, to places where otherwise you would not be able to enter; no one will be afraid to talk before you, and you will hear things which an ordinary man would never hear."

This advice seemed good to the prince, and he made up his mind to follow it. His friend got him a beggar's sack, a ragged suit of clothes and a pilgrim's staff, and soon the dignified prince had become a hunch-backed beggar. He set out at once, forced his way into the palaces of the mighty and the huts of the poor, snuffed about everywhere, but all in vain. Not knowing what to do next, he returned to his friend and told him of his fruitless search.

"Were you in the big house near here also?" asked his friend. No, he had not been there. But that could soon be put right. He went over to it at once, and was admitted by the gatekeeper. Then he begged through one room after another. And he got generous gifts from everyone. In the second storey he found the mistress of the house in a special room. She lay on a couch, and . . . it was Helena. She knew him at once. And yet no joy shone out of her eyes, rather bitter anger. In a harsh, scolding voice she ordered her people to put out the impudent beggar and throw a broom after him.

"What shall I do now?" he asked his friend when he had told him all that had happened. "Tell me, perhaps you can think of some other way."

"Throw away the clothes you have on; now you must win back your Helena with the sword," was the answer he received.

That was advice after Sane's own heart. More quickly than he had become a beggar, he became again a young, warlike prince.

"Now we will lose no time," said the friend. "You

fetch your wife, I will overpower the guard and cover your escape. We must do it at once, this moment."

They burst furiously into the big house. The guard did not dare to oppose them. Sane stormed up the stair, struck down the soldiers who would have stopped him, threw three of them downstairs, seized the swooning Helena and carried her off. A big crowd had gathered, for the news of the bold attack had spread like lightning through the town. But Sane and his friend did not lose their presence of mind. Sane cut his way through the crowd and his friend covered his retreat. Slowly they fought their way through hundreds of enemies to the shore, where their ship awaited them. They reached it unhurt, and the anchor was hoisted at once. The wind was favourable and carried the ship quickly away. And from the deck the two warriors sent one deadly arrow after another among the dense crowd of their enemies on shore.

And now Sane sailed back towards his home with his wife, so hardly won back in bloody conflict, and his friend. As his home came into sight, Sane said to his friend, "There is the shore already. I hope you will be my guest so that I may repay you in some measure for your services to me."

"No, I cannot stay," he replied, "important business calls me back to my own home. But you can thank me by dividing your prize with me."

"Why divide? Take her for yourself; I will never be able to live with her."

"No, we must divide her." No sooner had he spoken than he split her into two halves with his sabre; the head and upper part of the body fell on one side, the rest of the body on the other.

At first Sane was petrified with horror: he had not

expected such an end to his search. But in spite of that, he was not sorry for the wife he had once loved so deeply, her treachery had wounded his pride too much.

"I will take her head," he said, "and show it to my people. They shall all know that I have not come home empty-handed, and that faithlessness has earned the reward it deserved."

The friend lifted up the dead body and threw it into the sea. Then he went on board his ship and took farewell of Sane: "Farewell, you have indeed lost your wife, but she was faithless to you. Know for your consolation that the seven brothers Baraghun have a sister; she shall be the companion of your life."

When Sane got home he told his people all that had happened, and gave orders that Helena's head should be exhibited. Then he determined to seek the Baraghun brothers. He looked everywhere for them on the dry land, but in vain. Convinced that they were not to be found there, he went on board ship and looked for them on the sea. He sailed across and across the Black Sea, and then the Mediterranean Sea. There he came upon a large island, where he landed and inquired for the Baraghun brothers. As it turned out, they did actually live on that island. Sane mounted a horse and rode to the nearest town. When he rode through the gate he asked the first man he met where the brothers lived. He directed him to the castle. Sane rode there straightway, knocked on the door and was admitted. The Baraghun brothers received him kindly though they did not know who he was nor what he wanted, but from the badge on his breast they knew he was a prince.

After supper he was conducted to bed. On the following morning the seven brothers presented themselves solemnly before him, and asked him, as was the custom

in their country, what he wanted. Sane told them his name and the object of his journey. The six eldest brothers hung their heads sadly, only the youngest looked Sane merrily in the face and asked his brothers, after a few moments, why they were silent, their guest was waiting for his answer. Then the eldest said: "Our sister is as strong as a giant, and she is not only proud, she is cruel. None of us would dare to tell her of your courtship, none of us dare even to cross the threshold of her room." Then the youngest cried: "Though it costs me my life, I am ready to sacrifice myself for our honoured guest. I will tell her at once of your request." He had no sooner spoken than he went away to look for his sister. But Sane called after him: "Say to your sister only that I would like to see her to lay my request before her in person."

The youngest brother trod boldly into his sister's room and said, "Prince Sane has been our guest since last night; he wishes to see you. What answer shall I take him?"

"He may come," she answered. Greatly delighted, the messenger flew back to Sane, and with a face beaming with joy gave him the message. The elder brothers also congratulated themselves that their sister had become more gentle.

Sane followed close on the invitation. As he stood in the doorway, the sister rose from her couch, an honour she had never before shown to anyone, she who allowed no one to come to see her. Then Sane took his courage in both hands and said:

"Princess, I have heard of your beauty, and I come to offer you my heart and hand. Will you be my wife?"

Without saying a word, the princess turned away. Sane repeated his proposal; she turned further away

from him. Only when he had repeated his request for the third time she said: "I agree to everything."

Beside himself with joy, Sane hurried back to the brothers. When they heard of the consent of the princess, they commanded that the joyful news should be at once made known to the people.

The marriage day was fixed. Each one of the seven brothers had an ox, a cow and a sheep killed for the feast. It was a giant wedding, so many people were there that it was impossible even to count them.

A bard came, took his instrument in his hand and sang songs of the ancient glory of the people. But then he swept over the strings and sang quite another song—how a merchant of the country on the other side of the sea had forced himself into the castle of a certain prince and carried off his wife.

Sane guessed at once who the song was about; but the Baraghuns and even the singer himself had no idea that the song had any connection with him. His head drooped sadly and heavy tears rolled over his cheeks. When his brothers-in-law saw that, they ordered the singer to sing another song.

He swept the strings again and sang of how much blood had been spilled on Helena's account, when the husband she had deceived fought for her and carried her off.

Sane's head hung still lower at this, his heart became heavier and heavier when he saw that his fate was known to the world.

When the Baraghuns saw that this song also oppressed Sane, they proposed, according to the customs of the country, to amuse themselves by games and contests. Everyone crowded from the hall to the courtyard. The youths amused themselves with games and tried

their strength by fighting in the ring and other exercises. Then they began shooting with bow and arrows at a target, and finally tried their skill throwing stones. Sane watched all this silently, but took no part in anything. That displeased the guests, and they went to him and asked him why he did not enter into the sports with them. One of them even handed him a stone and challenged him to show his power and his skill.

"I will not refuse the general wish," said Sane. "I will try my luck."

And he took the heavy stone and threw it three times further than any of the others. They were all astonished and assured each other they could never accomplish such a feat even if they practised for a hundred years.

That brought the marriage festivities to a close. When the guests dispersed, the whole town rang with the story of Sane's prowess. And when the stars began to twinkle in the sky, Sane was conducted to the bridal chamber.

It was already late at night, but Sane could not sleep. And he noticed that his young wife was strangely restless. In order to find out the reason of this, he pretended to be asleep. Soon she rose, went into the hall next their bedroom, opened a trunk, took out a set of armour and put it on. Then she went down to the court, led her horse out of its stable, saddled it, mounted it, and flew like an arrow through the open gate out into the wide world.

Sane sprang up, dressed himself, girt on his weapons, fetched his horse and flew after his wife. As it was very dark she did not notice that anyone was galloping after her. Soon they both came to a deep gorge, where a goodly number of armed men were assembled. Sane mingled with them without being noticed, and followed

with eager attention what was going on. These men had assembled to attack the neighbouring town under the leadership of Sane's wife. Should the undertaking succeed, then they would load their loot on to their horses, while their leader covered their retreat.

And so it turned out. At the appointed time they all pressed into the town, killed the sleeping inmates ruthlessly, carried off everything that seemed valuable and loaded it on their horses. The inhabitants, absolutely unprepared as they were, were overwhelmed; at first they lost their heads, but then they rallied and attacked the robbers. Sane's wife threw herself against them, but he soon noticed to his horror that her strength was failing. He hastened to her help, and together they performed miracles of bravery. When she saw that a giant stood beside her who was even stronger than herself, she wondered at his enormous strength and his heroic courage. All at once she noticed that his hand was bleeding; an arrow had wounded him. She hastened to him and bound up his wound with her silk kerchief. But now the fight was coming to an end; the enemy drew back, and the attacking party set out for home with their rich plunder.

The robbers were still busy dividing their spoil when Sane sprang on his horse and disappeared. His wife looked round for her deliverer, but could see him nowhere. Then she too jumped on her horse and rode off in the direction of her castle. Before sunrise she arrived home, and lay down in bed beside her husband. Then she noticed that his hand was bandaged with a silk kerchief. As she looked more closely she recognised it and guessed who her deliverer was. Her astonishment soon gave place to emotion, she threw herself into his arms and said, "Know that up till now I have not

been like other women. Every night I have ridden secretly away and taken part in sudden attacks. I was away from home for weeks and months, and had heroic adventures at different places. Once, when I was dressed as a man, I met a knight on the open sea who was looking for his wife, and I went to his aid. When we had taken her back by force of arms, I struck the faithless one down with my sabre and threw her body into the sea. . . ."

Now it was Sane's turn to be astonished! he recognised his former friend and helper in the features of his wife. He would have thrown himself into her arms, but she pushed him back, saying: "Up till now I have been a heroic woman, but now I have found a hero who is stronger than I. I give myself up to him, renounce my former habits, and take up the duties of a wife. I will be nothing but a weak woman in the future, that will be better both for you and me."

When this change in her ways became known, everyone rejoiced, her seven brothers not less than the whole people. All hastened to wish Sane and his incomparable wife joy. Several days were spent in feasting and banqueting and then the young couple betook themselves, with rich gifts, to Sane's home.

27. KITSCHÜW

THERE was one king in Schura,¹ another in Petrowsk. He in Schura had five sons, but he of Petrowsk had none. Both kings were great friends; they were always to be seen together. One day they were both in Schura

¹ Temir-Chan-Schura, in Daghestan, is forty-six kilometres from Petrowsk, on the shore of the Caspian Sea.

at the wedding of a nobleman. Suddenly a messenger arrived from Petrowsk with the tidings that the queen was ill and begged her husband to return home. The king pulled a hundred roubles out of his pocket, gave them to the messenger, and in half an hour he and his friend were already in Petrowsk. But they had not been long there before a messenger came post haste from Schura to say that the Queen of Schura was laid up, and would like her husband to return home at once. This messenger too received a hundred roubles reward, and the two kings travelled together back to Schura. There they vowed to each other that if one of them should become the father of a son and the other the father of a daughter, the two children should marry each other and should be formally betrothed as soon as they were born.

And it so happened that the Queen of Schura bore her sixth son, the Queen of Petrowsk her sixth daughter. The children both grew very fast; when the princess was still quite a little girl she already understood about looking in a mirror, and the prince could ride at the same age. When the princess was thirteen years old she was so beautiful that the queen would not let her be seen on the street, and at that age the prince had already begun to hunt.

Now what more shall I tell you? Shall I tell you of the three-headed Ajdaha? ¹

Well, this Ajdaha had heard how beautiful the princess was, and so he asked his mother, who could work magic, how he should set about winning her for his bride. The mother changed him into a little golden bird, and said, "Fly away to the roof of the king's palace." This he did, and just as he flew up the princess was standing at her window. The golden bird flew to her, and the

¹ A fabulous creature something like a Div.

princess, who had never seen a bird like him, caught him at once. But the bird, who had quickly changed himself back into an Ajdaha, seized her and carried her off.

Now of whom shall I tell you next? Of the queen, the mother of the stolen princess?

Well, the queen came soon afterwards into her daughter's room and saw that it was empty. She had the whole town searched at once, but in vain . . . the princess was nowhere to be found. Messengers were sent to Schura, but she was not there either. The five eldest sons of the King of Schura set out to look for her, and as they passed through a wood they saw their youngest brother, Kitschüw, lying under a tree. "Hullo, brother!" they called out to him, "why are you lying there? Do you not know what a misfortune has happened to you? Your bride has disappeared!" "Ah, ha!" replied the brother, "but I know better than you who has carried off Altuntschatschä (Golden Locks). It was the three-headed Ajdaha." The brothers proposed to him when they heard this that they should all go together to rescue the princess. But first of all they would go home to make their preparations.

Both kings happened to be in Schura at the time. "Hullo, father! Hullo, father-in-law, listen to me," called the youngest son; "what are you going to do, father-in-law, to find Altuntschatschä again?" "I will give you seven Tulpan horses," he answered. "And you, father, what do you think of doing?" "I will give you weapons and provender for your journey."

"And you, eldest brother, what will you do?" "I will pray God to divide the sea that we can see in what part of it the Ajdaha is." "And you, second brother, what will you do?" "I will pray God to build a tower in which we can hide ourselves if the Div follows

us." "And I," said Kitschüw himself, "I will cut off Ajdaha's head."

The following day Kitschüw set out, with his five brothers and his friend Aslanä. Mounted on the Tulpan horses provided by Kitschüw's father-in-law, they travelled in seven days a distance that would on other steeds have taken them seven years, and at last they came to the shore of a great sea. "Now, eldest brother, fulfil your promise!" said Kitschüw. He did so, and at his prayer the sea was opened up and they saw the place where the three-headed Ajdaha was. He lay at the bottom of the sea asleep and Altuntschatschä had one of his heads on her lap. Kitschüw drew his sabre and rushed at Ajdaha to slay him. "Wait a little, Kitschüw," said Altuntschatschä, "you cannot do it that way. Do you see that fish there? Kill it first: you will find in it a box which contains Ajdaha's soul. Take it out and throw it away; then he will not be able to get up, and you can cut off his heads and set me free." Kitschüw followed the advice of his bride, caught the fish, opened it up, pulled out the box, cut the soul in pieces, struck off Ajdaha's three heads, took Altuntschatschä and fled.

What shall I tell you now? About Enäj, who was Ajdaha's mother?

She came some time later to visit her son. When she found him cut to pieces she was very angry and began to kill the fish of the sea. Then a big fish swam up to her and said, "Enäj, why are you so angry at us? Look there! That big fish ate up the soul of your son, kill him and take your son's soul out of him!" Enäj did as she was advised, and by that means brought her son back to life again. He wept at first when he became alive again, but then made ready at once to follow Kitschüw.

"Brothers!" cried Kitschüw. "Brothers, do you know where this fine rain comes from all of a sudden? I know. Ajdaha is coming after us. Now it is your turn, second brother, to keep your word." And the second brother prayed to God, and God at once let a high tower appear before them, in which the six brothers and Altuntschatschä hid themselves. When Ajdaha came to the tower he sprang up it but could not reach them. He sprang a second time, and Kitschüw succeeded in cutting off all his three heads with one blow.

Seven days later Kitschüw with his bride and his seven brothers arrived home. How glad the kings were and what a joyful feast they arranged!

Kitschüw lay in bed for a time and Altuntschatschä sat beside him. Suddenly he sprang up and said, "I must go away at once." "Where must you go, then, so suddenly?" asked his bride. "Wait for me for three years, three days, three hours and three minutes," he replied: "if I am not back by that time, then you can do whatever you like." He said the same thing to his mother, who wept bitterly when she heard her son's intention. Aslanä wanted to go with him, but Kitschüw would not allow him, and set out quite alone on his journey. On the ninth or the tenth day he came to a place where three paths divided, and there were three sign-posts. On one of them was written, *If you go by me, you will not return*; on the second, *If you go by me, you may or may not return*; and on the third, *If you go by me, you will return*. Kitschüw chose the first path. After a time he came to a spring. There his horse said suddenly in human speech, "Kitschüw, dismount and bathe in this spring." "Why?" asked Kitschüw. "Why?" replied the horse, "you do not need to know that just now." Kitschüw got off and bathed in the spring. After

a time his horse began again to speak: "Kitschüw, I will tell you something. In the country in which we now are there are two kings who are brothers. The elder brother is very fierce, the younger not so much so. I will change you into a golden bird. The two brothers will soon pass by this way; I will disappear now, but I will give you three hairs out of my tail and tell you two words which you must remember carefully. If you say the first, you will change yourself into sand; if you say the second, you will change into a grain of corn. And if any great danger threatens you, set fire to one of the hairs." So saying the horse disappeared, and Kitschüw set himself in the form of a bird at the edge of the spring.

Shortly after, he saw two riders coming; they were the two kings. The younger of the two was a keen sportsman; wherever he saw a beautiful bird, he either killed it or caught it in order to eat it. But this time his brother warned him: "Leave that bird alone! Do not catch it, or do it any harm." But the golden bird flew round the young king, who said to himself: "How can I pass such a lovely bird without catching it?" So he put out his hand and the bird flew straight into it. The huntsman at once put the little creature in his breast, without his elder brother noticing it. When they got home, he gave the bird to one of his sisters. In the evening she was playing with the bird when it flew to her shoulder, pecked her first on the cheek and then on the breast. "No, no," she said, "my breast is not for you, that belongs to Kitschüw." Hardly had she spoken before the bird took on human form; the same Kitschüw of whom she had just spoken stood before her. "I am Kitschüw," he said. "Good," she answered, "but before I can belong to you, you must accomplish three things.

First you must wrestle with me, then you must change yourself into sand, and then you must fight with seventy Ajdahas." Kitschüw forced the maiden to the ground, then he changed himself into sand, but before he entered into the fight with the seventy Ajdahas he set fire to one of the hairs from the tail of his horse. It appeared at once, and together they overcame the seventy and slew them all. Then he mounted his horse, put the maiden before him and rode home, where a great feast was arranged to celebrate his return.

But when he wanted to go to his wives—he had two wives now—he was not allowed, he must first fetch the sister of the three Ajdahas for his friend. He set out at once. First he killed the three Ajdahas. But their sister sat in the middle of a great tree. He must first of all tear it open. That he did, but afterwards was very tired and laid himself down to sleep. In the meantime his friend came along. He took the tree with him and rode off. But Kitschüw wakened at once and hastened after him. When he saw it was his friend, they went happily homewards together.

And when they arrived a much greater feast was held than had ever been held before.

28. THE RICH MAN AND THE POOR MAN

THERE was once a poor man and his wife. A rich man said to him one day, "Come, poor wretch, I will take you out hunting with me." "How can I go hunting with you," the poor man replied, "when I have no food to take with me?" "Tell your wife she must beg for a bowl of flour and bake provisions for your journey." So the poor man went to his wife and explained the matter to

her; she went out begging, brought home a bowl of flour and baked bread for her husband.

The following day the rich man and the poor man went hunting together. They wandered about all day, but saw no game. In the evening they looked out a place to spend the night, lighted a fire and sat down. They sat there a long time, at last the poor man said it must be time for supper. "Yes, you are right," answered the rich man. They took out what they had brought, ate their supper and then lay down to sleep. The next day again they saw no game and returned at night to their former camp. Again they sat there for a long time till the poor man again thought of food. "But what shall we eat?" asked the rich man. "Have you perhaps still some food?"—pulled out his own provisions and ate, but gave the poor man nothing. He looked on while the other satisfied his hunger, and as he saw that nothing was intended for him, he asked for a morsel. "If you allow me to put out one of your eyes, then I will give you something to eat," answered the rich man. What could the poor man do? There was nothing for it but to sacrifice his eye, for which he received a piece of bread. But he had hardly eaten it before the rich man said: "Get away from here! Your misfortune has depressed me," and drove him away. He would not even allow him to spend the night there. The poor man groped his way through the wood during the night and came at last to an open field where he saw a light at the foot of a little hill, and went towards it. As he drew nearer he saw a house before him. He looked in, and as he found it was empty he crawled up among the rafters and hid himself there. Soon afterwards a wolf, a bear and a fox arrived and came into the house. The bear said to the

others: "We live together and we sleep together, then why should we not also eat together? Let each of us bring out what he has."

"All that I have," said the fox, "is a piece of gold cloth. That is all that I possess, I live by it, I eat and drink by it. I only need to shake it once or twice and all sorts of things to eat and drink fall out of it." "That is certainly an invaluable possession, fox," said the bear; "but I have a whole pit full of gold. Yes, that is what I have; just come with me and I will show it to you." The wolf pointed to a tree and said, "When I steal a sheep and am wounded I run to this tree and rub myself upon it, and my wounds heal up at once as if nothing had happened to me."

In this way the three shared all their possessions and all their powers in common. But the bear was a clever beast. "If we use up all that we have," he said, "what will happen to us? It will be better to work. What will you do?" "I will go and bring in hens," said the fox. "And I will go and fetch a sheep," said the wolf, and "I will go and eat oats," said the bear.

They arranged all that at night, and in the morning each set out to do what he had planned. But our poor man was still up among the rafters. When the three had gone away he climbed down, took everything that belonged to the bear and the fox, the cloth of gold and the money, went to the tree the wolf had spoken of and rubbed his face where his eye had been put out. At once he saw again as well as before. Then he went on and came to a shepherd who asked him what he was carrying on his back. "Nothing special," he answered, "I was hunting with the rich man, what could I have but cabbages?"

In the meantime the wolf had come up, and called

out to the shepherd he should hand over the tribute he owed him. "Just come here," the shepherd called to him, and the wolf slunk up to the flock, nearer and nearer. But the shepherd shot at him with such good aim that his brains fell out of his skull. The poor man took the brains—he said to the shepherd it was a cure for certain illnesses—and stuck them in his knapsack. The wolf ran to his tree and rubbed himself upon it—but this time it did not cure him; the tree had used up all its magic powers on the poor man! He travelled on till he came to a village that belonged to a prince.

Now this prince was very ill and from all quarters people were coming—as the custom is—to visit him. The poor man asked them why they had all gathered there, and when he heard the reason he expressed his desire to visit the prince himself. At first they would not allow him, but the prince had heard of his wish and gave orders that he was to be allowed in. The poor man came into the prince's room, sat down and said, according to the custom, "May the power of a living man be granted to you." Then he asked the sick man what remedies were being used. "Ah," he answered, "if only I knew somebody who would bring me a good remedy, I would give him whatever he asked." The poor man had some milk brought in, boiled the wolf's brain in it, and gave the sick man some of the soup to drink. And the prince became well instantly—he felt as strong as a stag.¹ And he did not stint his thanks; he had his horses brought in from the meadow, chose out the best horse, saddled it, took his best sabre, his best dagger, his best gun and his best pistol and gave them all to the poor man. When he was already mounted on the horse to ride away,

¹ To be as strong as a stag—*sadji-chuzān*—signifies extreme health of mind and body.

the prince presented him with a whole flock of sheep with its shepherds. And the poor man rode off as fast as the wind.

When the rich man heard of all this, he went to meet the poor man and asked him where he had got all his riches.—“Tell me quickly, or I will take half of them away from you,” he threatened; “we were together, you know.” “If you let me put out one of your eyes I will tell you,” answered the poor man. Well, there seemed no way out of it; the rich man held out his face and the poor man put out his eye with the dagger he had received from the prince. Then he said, “When I left you that night, I saw a light, went towards it and came to a hill where a bear, a wolf, and a fox lived. I got all that I have from them.” The rich man set out at once, found the house and hid himself among the rafters. The three came home towards evening, first of all the wolf, who did not seem very well. When they were all three together and had rested a little, the bear asked, “Well, which of you has brought home anything?” “I went to the shepherds,” said the wolf, “and was wounded. Then I ran to my tree and rubbed and rubbed myself upon it, but in vain—that is why I am not well.” “And I,” said the fox, “I went to all the hen-houses but could get nothing.” “And I,” added the bear, “I wanted to eat oats but it was still green, and so I too have come home empty.” They sat there a long while, till it was time for supper. Then the bear told the fox to go and prepare something to eat and drink. The fox lighted a candle and looked for his cloth of gold, but could not find it anywhere. “Ah, you are only teasing us,” said the bear; “I will go and fetch a rouble out of my pit.” But the pit was empty! “I am ill and know nothing about it!” said the wolf. “No, no, it must have

been you. You are just pretending to be ill so that we may not suspect you, but you cannot deceive us that way," cried the bear, and he and the fox threw themselves on the wolf. They killed him and ate him up.

When they were finished, the fox sprang up among the rafters to look for his cloth of gold, and there he found the rich man. "Here is a man," he cried down to the bear; "he has hidden himself here. He is the thief, and we have killed our companion for nothing."

And they dragged the rich man down, and ate him up in spite of all his assurances that he was not the thief.

But God had appointed a happy life for the poor man, and he lives to this day.

29. THE HELPFUL RAM

THERE was once a man who had taken a second wife. The man had a daughter and so had the wife. But the wife loved her own daughter more than the daughter of her husband.

The two maidens went every day to the meadow with their sheep. The mother gave her daughter a little bag full of good things to eat, but to the daughter of her husband she only gave pieces of hard bread. And that was why the one laughed all day and the other wept all day.

But there came one day to the daughter of the husband a ram, who said, "Be so good, maiden, as to tell me why you weep all day."

"How should I not weep?" she replied. "Come, I will show you what I have to eat!" And she led him to a hole in a tree where she had hidden her bread.

"Look, that is all I have to eat, but to her own daughter she gives a whole bag full of good things."

The ram was heartily sorry for the poor girl. "Look here," he said to her. "Pull out my right horn, shake it, and eat whatsoever you will. Anything that is left over put back in the horn and stick it back in its place again."

The girl pulled out his right horn, shook it, and lo and behold! all sorts of delicious food and drink lay before her. She ate to her heart's content, put what was over in the horn, and stuck it on to the ram again.

"When you are hungry, just weep, and I will come at once," said the ram and went back to its flock. And so the maiden could eat till she was satisfied every day, and grew so joyful that she sang the whole day long.

But one evening the mother asked her own daughter, "What does your friend do then the whole day?"

"She sings," answered her daughter. The woman was annoyed to hear that, and she told her daughter that she must push the girl over the cliffs.

But the husband's daughter had overheard this, and she told it all to the ram. He found a remedy.

"Decoy her to-morrow to the edge of the cliffs," he said, "and leave everything else to me." And after the two girls had driven their sheep out to the pasture the following day, the husband's daughter decoyed her companion to the place the ram had fixed.

And he knocked the daughter of the wife over the cliff so that she was dashed to pieces.

30. THE FIRE-HORSE

THERE was once upon a time an old man who had three sons: two of them were clever, but the third was stupid and dirty. Day and night this stupid fellow idled about the house and did nothing. Now the father had sowed a

piece of land, and the seed had sprung up well and was already in the ear. But every night someone came and damaged the crop. In order to put a stop to that, the father said to his sons: "Dear children, take it in turns to go at night to the field; watch it and try to catch the thief."

The first night the eldest son went out. But about midnight sleep overpowered him and he nodded off. In the morning he went home and said: "I did not close my eyes all night. I got as stiff as a piece of wood with the cold, but I saw nothing of the thief." The next night the second son went out, slept the whole night, and told the same story when he went home. The third night it was the turn of the stupid son. He took a rope with him, sat down at the edge of the field and waited. As it came near to midnight he felt sleep overpowering him, and he took out his knife, cut his finger and rubbed salt in the wound. So his sleep passed off. But exactly at midnight the ground suddenly shook, a wind rose, and a horse came flying right down from heaven with wings of fire and let itself down on the field. Clouds came out of its nostrils and lightning flashed from its eyes. And the horse began to eat the corn, but trampled down more than it ate.

The stupid son crept slowly up to the horse, sprang suddenly upon it, and threw the rope round its neck. The horse pulled with all its might, shied and stamped, but could not tear itself loose. The stupid son held it fast. When at last it grew tired of struggling it tried pleading instead: "John, little friend, let me go, I will do you great service if you only let me loose."

"Good," said John, "but how shall I find you again?"

"When you want me come out to the field, whistle three times and call: 'Fire-horse, Fire-horse! Come

quickly,' and I will be with you at once." John let the horse go and bade him leave the field alone from that time forward.

Then he went home.

"What have you seen? What have you done?" his brothers asked him.

"I saw a fire-horse. I caught it and made it promise me that it would leave our field in peace." He did not tell them the rest, and the brothers laughed heartily at their stupid brother, but from that day the field was left alone.

A day or two later the king sent messengers to every town and village in his kingdom to make this announcement: "Lords, citizens, nobles and peasants! Our mighty king is about to hold a feast and invites you all to attend it. The festivities will last for three days. Take your best horses with you. The king's only daughter, who is more beautiful than the sun, will sit on the balcony of a tower. Whosoever can jump so high on his horse that he can reach the princess and pull her ring from her finger, to him the king will give his daughter to wife."

John's brothers went off to the feast, not to try their own luck, but just to look on. John begged them to take him with them. "Why take you, stupid?" they asked, "do you want to frighten the people with your ugly face? Stay at home."

So the brothers mounted their horses and set out. But John went to the field and called his fire-horse. Where did it come from, that in a moment it stood before him? John jumped over its head, after which his face was quite changed; he had become such a handsome fellow that no one would have believed he was stupid, dirty John.

Then he mounted his horse and hastened to the feast. There he saw that a huge crowd had collected on the wide square before the king's palace. And on the balcony of the high tower the king's daughter sat, as beautiful as the moon, her ring gleaming like the sun. No one was bold enough to venture the spring up into the air. But who was this who lifted his hand? Our John! He gripped his horse firmly with his knees, the animal neighed and made a tremendous spring, which was short only by three steps. The people bit their tongues and wondered. But John turned his horse round and fled. On the way he met his brothers; as they did not get out of his way fast enough he gave them a tremendous blow as he passed and disappeared. When he got home to his field, he jumped off and at once became stupid John again. He let the horse loose and went home. In the evening his brothers returned and told their father with bated breath all that had happened. But John only listened to them and laughed to himself.

Next day the two elder brothers went again to the festival, and again they refused to take their youngest brother with them. John went to the field, called his fire-horse, jumped on its back and rode away. As he came near the king's palace, he saw there was an even bigger crowd than on the previous day. Everyone was looking at the king's daughter, but no one dared to attempt to spring. John again gripped his horse with his knees and let it go. This time it failed only by two steps. The people were still more astonished. John disappeared more quickly even than before, and gave his brothers an even heavier blow as he passed them. . . .

On the third day he came again. But this time he gave his horse such a blow with his whip . . . that the animal leapt with extraordinary power into the air and reached

the balcony. John pulled the ring off the finger of the princess and turned round to ride away. "Hullo, there! Stop him! Stop him!" everyone shouted, the king, the queen, and all the people. . . . But he was already away.

John came home and bound up his hand with a rag. "What has happened to your hand?" the women of the house asked him. "I pricked it picking berries. It is nothing," answered John, and stretched himself out before the fire.

The brothers soon came home and told their father what had happened in the town. In the meantime John wanted to have a look at his ring, but hardly had he got the rag off when the whole hut began to shine. "Stupid! Don't play with fire," his brothers shouted at him; "you are no use for anything, and you nearly set the house on fire just now. You should have been sent away long ago."

Three days later messengers came again and commanded all the people of the country to come to a new festival which the king was about to hold. Whosoever did not come would have his head cut off.

What could be done in that case? The father went with his whole family to the festival. They ate, drank, and made merry. At the end of the banquet the princess herself handed round honey-water. John got some too. And that day he looked like someone I would not like you to have even for an enemy—in torn clothes, with dirty, untidy hair he stood there, and round his hand he had a dirty rag; he was a loathsome spectacle. "Youth, why is your hand bound up?" asked the princess; "let me see what is wrong."

John took off the bandage, and on his finger gleamed and sparkled the princess's ring. She pulled it off his

finger, led John to her father, and said: "Father, this is my bridegroom."

John was then taken to the bath, washed, combed, anointed, dressed in other garments, and he looked such a handsome youth that his own people hardly knew him again.

Then the wedding was celebrated and the festivities lasted for seven days and seven nights.

31. THE FAITHFUL SON

THERE once lived in a certain village a merchant and his son: he had no one else belonging to him in the wide world, for his wife had died long before. After her death a Djinn had fallen in love with him and he had taken her to live with him. This Djinn woman wanted to see the son of her lover, but that, of course, was not possible. Now the merchant fell ill, and before his death he commanded his son to cook him a dish of pilaw every night after he was dead, and to put it in a certain corner of the stable which he specially described to him.

The merchant died, and on the third day after his death the son hired a cook and had a dish of pilaw prepared every evening, which he put in the prescribed spot. He did that till all his money was spent and he had nothing left but his land and his house. He sold his land first of all, then his house, and spent all the money he got for them on the daily dish of pilaw. When he had only enough left to provide the pilaw once more, he thought to himself: "What am I doing now? I will watch to-night and see where the pilaw really goes to." And he saw how a woman came out of a corner of the stable, took the dish and went away. He followed her

and came to a place where no one lived except Djinns. Then he got frightened and would have turned back, but the woman said, "Here, boy, do not be frightened. Follow me and no one will touch you." So he followed her, and was led by her into a splendid castle which stood in a garden like the Garden of Paradise. A woman came running up, embraced and greeted him. "Welcome, my son," she said, and the young man wondered at this. "Who can she be?" he thought, "my mother was older than that when she died." Then two boys ran up and greeted him as their brother and hung on his arm. He wondered more and more: "They cannot really be my brothers. Who are they then? Are they Djinns?" And he became more and more frightened. But the woman who called herself his mother said, "Come, child, come into the house and sit down." And when he had gone in and sat down, she went on: "You do not know me. But only because you never saw me in that world. When your mother died, I went to your father. I am a Djinn. The two boys are your brothers. Do not be afraid, when your father lay dying we came to an agreement about a certain thing. I was very anxious to see you, and your father told me he had asked you to put a dish of pilaw in his stable every night from the third night after his death, and that we Djinns should send someone to fetch the pilaw. The whole of the pilaw is lying here, I will show it to you." And she led him to a house next door, and showed him a great heap of gold. "Look," she said, "you have faithfully kept your word to your father. That is the money that you have spent on pilaw. It belongs to you, so you do not need to be anxious."

When he had been there for some days his mother was asked to go somewhere on a visit. When she was

getting ready to go away, she said to her son: "Stay in this room and do not go into the other one." "Very good," he answered, but after his mother had gone he considered it again, and thought to himself: "How will my mother know if I do go and look into the other room?" So he went across to it and found a room which was quite empty. As he was going out again he saw a picture hanging above the door, and it was so beautiful that he swooned. When he came to himself he looked at the picture again and said: "I must at all cost find the maiden whose picture that is; I will not leave here without her." Then he went back to his own room and fell swooning to the ground. When his mother came back and found him lying on the ground, she asked: "Child, what is the matter with you? Has anything happened to you? Did you perhaps go into the room I forbade you?" "Yes," he answered. "Well, if God wills," said she, "you may win her. But calm yourself in the meantime."

Then she gave him a new suit of clothes and a pillow, called the woman who used to fetch the pillow from the stable every evening, and said to her, "The daughter of the Chan lives in such and such a country. Take this youth to her." "With pleasure," she replied, "only he must do exactly as I tell him." "I will obey you faithfully in everything," answered the son. Then they gave him some money, a horse was led out, the woman got up on its back and took the youth on the saddle behind her.

They stopped near the place where the beautiful maiden lived whose picture the youth had seen. "Go now into the village," said the woman to her companion, "and stay there. Stay with anyone you like as their guest. Give them money for any expenses they may have for you. Then in the evening you will go to the maiden you

want to win. I will be there too, hidden behind the candlestick. When you speak to her she will not answer you. Take your cushion with you and sit on it, for she will not ask you to sit down. . . . Then you will speak to her, but she will not say a single word to you. When it is time for you to go away, turn to the candlestick and say, 'Listen to this, candlestick! I have come to visit this maiden, and she has not even answered my greeting. She is no Mussulman or she would surely have done that. I have spoken to her and she has remained silent—is she dumb? Now, candlestick, tell me a story. It is dull here, and besides it will soon be time to go home.' Then I, who will be hidden behind the candlestick, will say, 'O youth, what shall I say to you? Are you not ashamed that you have come to visit this maiden? She is no child of human parents: if she had been, she would have answered you. But I will tell you a story; there is a moot point in it which you shall solve. Listen to me, then.

“There were once three good friends and all three loved the same maiden, but none of them knew that. When they found out they said to each other, “We will go to her and ask her which of us she will have. She will then be a good friend to the other two.” So they sent a messenger to her and put the question to her. But her father did not know what he should do. “If I give her to one of them, what will the other two say? I have certainly only one daughter. My best plan will be to give the young people three thousand roubles; they must trade with it, and whoever makes most with it, he shall have my daughter.” He proposed this solution, they agreed to it, and he gave each of them a thousand roubles, and they went away to spend it. They travelled to a far-distant land, where they separated. The first found in a bazaar a horse that cost exactly a thousand roubles.

But it was a very special kind of horse, it could make a journey that ordinarily would take three months in three hours. The second found in another bazaar a telescope that also cost exactly a thousand roubles. But it also was a very special telescope; whosoever looked through it saw everything that was going on all over the world. And the third bought a bottle of medicine with his thousand roubles, a very special kind of medicine, one drop of it was sufficient to bring a dying person back to life.

“The three met again at a certain place, and told each other what they had bought with their money. And they determined to test their purchases the following morning. First the one who had bought the telescope looked through it and saw that the maiden they had been courting was at death’s door. “Ah,” said he with the medicine, “if I only knew someone who could take her this medicine.” “I can do that,” said he with the horse. No sooner said than done; he sprang on his horse, took the medicine, and in one hour was beside the dying girl. One drop of the medicine was put in her mouth, and she jumped up, sound and well. “You shall be my son-in-law,” said her father to him who had brought the medicine. But when the two others arrived, they came to blows, because each of them wanted the girl, and each of them had an equal right to her. “She belongs to me,” said he with the medicine. “No, to me,” asserted the owner of the horse, while he with the telescope said, “If I had not seen that she was dying, your horse and your medicine would have been useless.” “And to whom do you think she belongs?” the candlestick asked the young man.¹ “To my mind,” he answered, “she belongs

¹ The story-teller has forgotten that all this was being told the young man beforehand by the Djinn woman: he is telling it here as it happened afterwards.

to the one with the medicine." "No," said the girl, who had hitherto remained so obstinately silent, "if you are lying may you burst! She belongs to him with the horse." The youth stood up, clapped the girl on the shoulder, and said, "And you belong to me. To-morrow evening I will come again." With these words he went away.

But the Djinn woman who had stood behind the candlestick said to him, "When you go to her again to-morrow talk to her *tachta*.¹ I will hide underneath it and answer you."

The following evening the youth went again to the maiden, greeted her, but received no answer. Then he began to talk, but the maiden said nothing. "*Tachta*," he said, then, "I have greeted the maiden, and she has not answered me. She is surely no Mussulman. I have spoken to her, and she remains silent. Perhaps she is dumb. Come on, you speak to me." And the *tachta* began: "Yes, good youth, I will tell you something. Are you not ashamed to come to such a maiden? For this maiden is no human being. But I will tell you a story. There were once three comrades on a journey. One of them was a tailor, the second a carpenter, the third a scholar. One evening they stopped in a wood to spend the night there. The carpenter took the first watch. To pass the time he carved a human figure out of a piece of wood. Then when his watch was up, he lay down to sleep and the tailor came on guard. To amuse himself he made clothes for the wooden figure. And when he was finished, and his watch was up, it was the scholar's turn. When he saw the dressed figure standing there, he prayed to God: 'Lord, I pray Thee, give this being a soul.' And before his prayer was

¹ The *tachta* is a low wooden frame, covered with rugs and cushions, which serves in the Caucasus as a sofa.

finished, the maiden—for it was a maiden the carpenter had made—stood there and began to light a fire. When the three rose in the morning, each of them wanted to have the maiden. ‘I made her,’ said the carpenter; ‘I dressed her,’ said the tailor; but the scholar said, ‘I begged God for a soul for her.’ Now, good youth,” the tachta went on, “who do you think was right in this dispute?” “She belonged to the tailor,” said the youth. “No,” said the tachta, “to the carpenter.” But here the maiden could contain herself no longer: “If you are lying again may you burst asunder. If the scholar had not prayed for a soul for her, she would have remained the piece of wood she was. Therefore she belonged to the scholar alone.” Then the youth stood up, clapped her on the shoulder and said: “And you belong to me.” The maiden took him by the hand, led him to her father the Chan, and said, “Father, here is my bridegroom.” The Chan was very angry and shouted at his daughter, “What does this mean?” “Father, this is how it came about,” she said, and told him the whole story. Then the Chan himself took the youth by the hand, welcomed him as his son-in-law, and arranged a great wedding-feast.

When it was over, the young man said he must go away. “Why then?” asked the Chan. “Stay here, you will be Chan after my death, you will have a happy life here.” “No, no,” the young husband replied. “I am tired of being here, I must go back to my mother.”

So there was nothing more to be said; the Chan gave the young people much gold and many other possessions and let them go. When the young husband came to his mother, she was overjoyed. “Ah, my dear son, have you got your heart’s desire?” said she. “Do not stay here, rather go to the place where your father lived. But do not forget us! And one thing more. Come

with me into the other room. There lies the gold you paid out in order to fulfil your father's last wish. Here it is, take it, it belongs to you." "Good," said he, "I will take it and then go." He loaded the gold on a Djinn, got up on the shoulders of another Djinn himself and soon came to the place where his father had lived and died. There he became Chan and God sent him a son, and he lived contented and happy with wife and child.

"God be thanked," he used to say, "that I faithfully fulfilled my father's wishes. God has given me back all my money. Praise and thanks to Him."

II.—ANIMAL FABLES

32. THE FOAL, THE GOAT AND THE PIG

A FOAL, a goat, and a pig swore friendship. Then they went out to search for a place where they could live happily together. Their choice chanced to fall on a pit where some wolves were holding a banquet. They were not a little frightened at first, but the wolves invited them to come in, drank their health and bid them shout hurrah with the rest.

The pig grunted *gho, gho*; the goat bleated *ma-a-a, ma-a-a*, and the foal neighed *ya, ya*, all together; and they made such a noise that the wolves were frightened and ran away.

But the three stayed on there, as the place pleased them. After a time they went back again to their old ways. The goat chewed the twigs off the trees, the pig rooted up the ground with its snout, and the foal swept its tail to and fro. In the meantime the wolves had taken courage again, and slunk up to eat these three friends. But when they saw how the goat, the pig and the foal passed their time, their courage sank. "The goat," they said among themselves, "is breaking off the branches to beat us with, the pig is looking for us in the earth—'Where have the wolves gone to?' it says; 'have they perhaps crept into the earth?'—and the foal is thinking to itself, 'If I could only whisk the wolves as I whisk my flanks! If only they would come!'" And so the wolves were frightened and did not trust themselves to come any nearer.

33. THE CHEATED FOX

THERE was once a fox who, with his children, was nearly dying of hunger. One day he set out to look for something to eat. On the way he met a sheep. He flew at it and seized it.

"What do you want with me?" asked the sheep.

"I want to eat you."

"Ah," replied the sheep, "but my flesh has really no taste raw. Go and fetch a kettle and cook me; I will wait here till you come back."

The fox ran away home to fetch a kettle. But when he got back he could not find the sheep. The next day he went out again to look for food and was lucky enough to catch a goat.

"What do you want with me?" asked the goat.

"I want to eat you."

"Really? with all my shaggy coat on? Fetch a pair of scissors and clip me first. I will wait till you come back."

The fox ran home to get the scissors; but the goat made off as fast as it could.

The following day hunger again drove the fox out of his lair into the wood. Soon he met a wolf.

"Whither away?" asked the wolf.

"I and my children are dying of hunger," said the fox.

"I am looking for food."

"Come with me," said the wolf.

A little further on they met a horse. The wolf stopped in front of it, shook himself and asked the fox:

"Are my eyes rolling? Are the hairs of my back bristling?"

"Yes," said the fox. He had hardly spoken before the wolf was at the horse's throat and had strangled him.

They divided the spoil and the fox took something home for his children. But it did not last long, hunger soon crept in again to the fox's lair and drove him out on the search for food. Then he met a hare.

"Where are you going?" asked the fox.

"I am looking for food," answered the hare.

"Come with me," said the fox, for he had an idea in his head. He wanted to copy the wolf's example on the next opportunity. It was not long before they met a horse. The fox stood in front of it, shook himself, and asked the hare:

"Are my eyes rolling?"

"No."

"Say yes," ordered the fox, "or I will strike you dead."

"Very well then, yes."

Hoop! the fox sprang at the horse's throat.

"What do you want?" asked the horse.

"To eat you."

"That won't help you much," said the horse, "rather take out the gold that is hidden in my hoof, and buy yourself something to eat."

The fox thought that a good idea. But hardly had he stooped down to look under the horse's hoof when a terrific kick lifted him right into the air.

Feeling as if all his bones were broken, the fox dragged himself to a hole and reasoned with himself thus: "I caught a sheep and did not eat it at once. It served me right! Why did I need a kettle? I am myself the best cook! And the goat. That was too stupid! As if I could have made any use of its coat! And the gold in the horse's hoof! What use is gold to a fox?"

Now above the hole there stood a shepherd whom the fox had not seen. He flung a huge stone which hit the fox's back.

"Misfortune on misfortune," said the fox. "Even here, where there are no human beings, stones fall down on me."

So saying, he ran away.

34. THE BIRD WHO WAS CLEVER FOR OTHERS

THERE was once a dove who brought out young ones every year. And every year a fox came to the tree where she nested and demanded one of her young. "If you do not give me one," he threatened, "then I will climb up and eat you too."

One day the dove was sitting sadly beside her nest. She had just brought out a new brood of young ones and knew that the fox would soon come. But just then the bird Malik Ulhazin lighted on the tree where the dove sat, and asked her why she was so sad. The dove told him everything.

"How stupid you are!" said Malik Ulhazin; "when he comes again, do not be afraid, but tell him just to climb up to you if he can!"

The next day the fox came.

"Throw me down one of your young, or I will climb up and eat you as well as your brood."

"Just come up then and fetch it for yourself," the dove replied.

"Look at that now. Who has taught you that?" asked the fox.

"Malik Ulhazin," the dove admitted.

The fox said nothing, turned round and disappeared. He ran straight to Malik Ulhazin, whom he found standing beside a river, greeted him, and said:

"You creatures are precious in God's sight. You can

make a journey in an hour that would take us a whole month. But tell me this. If the wind blows from the right, to which side do you put your head?"

"To the left side," answered Malik Ulhazin.

"And when the wind blows from the left?" the fox inquired further.

"Then to the right side."

"But if it blows from both sides at once?"

"Oh, well, then we put our heads under our wings."

"How extraordinary!" cried the fox. "I should like to see that just for once! Please show me."

Malik Ulhazin at once complied with his request. But he had hardly put his head under his wing before the fox had him in his jaws.

"So you see," said the fox, "it would have been better if you had kept your good advice for yourself."

And then he enjoyed the flavour of the bird.¹

35. THE DONKEY AND THE CAMEL

A DONKEY and a camel lived in the same field, which suited them very well, and where they were very happy. One day after the donkey had eaten his fill he became very merry and felt he would like to sing.

"I should like to sing a song," he said to the camel, "I have a great desire to sing."

The camel was frightened. "Better not," he advised, "there is sure to be a misfortune if you sing." But the

¹ In a Georgian variant of this story, the dove revenges herself on the fox by appealing to a huntsman, who shoots the fox dead. The episode of Malik Ulhazin is not mentioned there. In a Hurkanian variant, it is a wolf who eats the young of the bird *kuklachai*. The fox helps the bird to revenge its young, but afterwards eats the next brood himself.

donkey paid no attention and let his voice ring out. A caravan which was passing near the field heard the song, caught the donkey and the camel, loaded burdens on their backs and drove them along with their other beasts of burden.

But the donkey got very tired. When the merchants saw that he could go no further, they put him with his load on to the camel's back. Shortly afterwards they came in the mountains to a path which led along the top of a precipice. "Ah ha," thought the camel, "now I will pay him back," and added aloud, "I have a great desire to dance. Yes, I really cannot help dancing!"

"Good gracious," exclaimed the donkey, "you surely will never dance here! I shall fall off!"

But the camel seemed not to hear him. And it had hardly danced its first steps before the donkey fell right down over the precipice.

36. THE FOX AND THE CRANE

A FOX and a crane had sworn friendship. Each of them had three young ones. One day when the crane had gone hunting, the fox killed one of the young cranes. Then he waited for the return of his friend and went weeping to meet him.

"Why do you weep?" asked the crane.

"Our best child is dead," answered the fox, "that is why I weep."

"One of mine or one of yours?" asked the crane.

"It is one of the long-necked ones," answered the fox. The crane only said, "Good," but in the course of the week the fox killed all the three young cranes.

"How is it," asked the crane, "that all my three

children had to die and not one of yours? Go to God and ask Him."

"But I have no wings," answered the fox.

So the crane took him on his back, and flew up with him towards heaven. When he got high up, he threw him off. And as he fell away down, the crane called out to him: "What is wrong with you?"

"I had something to say to you," answered the fox, "but I cannot find any place to stand."

As he spoke he was dashed to pieces on the ground.

37. THE BEAR, THE WOLF AND THE FOX

A BEAR, a wolf and a fox lived together. And once when there was deep snow on the ground, they became hungry. The bear searched for pieces of rotten wood and ate them; but the fox advised the wolf to eat up the bear.

"Silence!" said the wolf. "If he hears you he will strike us both dead and eat us."

"Let that be my affair," said the fox, "just do what I tell you. Lie down now and pretend that you are dead. And when we throw you into the water afterwards, then you can come to life again."

The wolf agreed, lay down and pretended he was dead. When the bear came home and saw his companion dead, he wept and lamented. But the fox comforted him: "I know a certain lake which brings the dead to life again; let us carry our friend there." And so they did. Whenever the wolf was thrown into the water, it came alive at once. Then the fox turned to the bear and proposed a plan to him: "We will eat you up just now, and you will get five-and-twenty sheep from us

next autumn in payment. Then as soon as we have eaten you up, we will throw you into that lake that brings the dead to life again."

The bear was agreeable to this plan, and was eaten up by his comrades.

38. THE HARE AND THE LION

THERE was a certain place in Hindustan where much grass grew and many springs gushed forth. There was a wood there too, of which human beings knew nothing, but in which the wild beasts lived. The lion was king over them all. Whenever he wished he went out hunting, but at such times all the other beasts were terribly frightened, and could feel no security till he returned. They all came together one day and took counsel with each other. And one said to the other. "Brother, this lion is now our king, and he eats any of us that happen to suit him. It would perhaps be better if we determined by drawing lots, which of us should be sent to the king, then the others would at least be saved fear and anxiety." This plan appealed to all the beasts, and so a request was sent to the lion begging his pardon for the suggestion. But the lion was pleased too; he let the beasts know that he only wanted his daily food, and it was no benefit to him that all his subjects should be thrown every day into a state of alarm.

And so it was determined by lottery who should go to the king to be eaten up. That went on for some time, till at last it came to be the turn of the hare.

But the idea of being eaten by the lion did not please him at all, and so he tried to stir up his companions in misery. "Brothers," he said, "how stupid we are, that

we allow ourselves freely to be eaten up. We will try to get the better of the lion and free ourselves from his tyranny." When the animals heard that, some of them laughed at the hare, that he, with his small stature, should attempt to measure his skill against that of the lion. But the hare gave no answer; he simply did not go the next day, when it was his turn to be eaten. The lion was very angry and wanted to break the whole agreement, but he reconsidered that because he was afraid the other kings would think he had been too hasty.

It was late towards midday when the hare made his appearance. He crossed his paws respectfully on his breast, wished the ruler "Good-day," and prayed that God might give the mighty king of all the beasts a long life. The king asked how his subjects were. "God bless thee, O king of all the beasts," answered the hare. "Early this morning as they were sending off another hare with me for thy breakfast, we met a lion who asked us where we were going. We told him the truth, that we were going to serve as thy breakfast. 'Well, but is there here anyone higher than I am?' he asked. 'This country belongs to me, and no one dare touch my subjects.' After he had thus spoken, he took the other hare away with him. I do not dare to repeat the angry words he used about you."

That was like a red-hot fire in the lion's heart. "Can you show him to me?" he asked. "Yes," answered the hare, and led him to a deep, deep well. "Lord king," said the hare, "I dare not go nearer, I got such a fright when the lion met us this morning. But he lives in there. If you take me under your arm I will show him to you."

So the lion took the hare under his arm, and set his forefoot on the edge of the spring. When he saw his own reflection in the water, he thought that was his

rival with the hare he had stolen. He let his booty spring out below his arm, sprang himself down into the well and was drowned.

That is a lesson for those who think it unnecessary to take any precautions, relying on their own strength.

39. THE FOX, THE WOLF AND THE MULE

THERE was once a great famine in Daghestan. A fox there had nothing to eat. "Why should I stay here?" he asked himself. "I had better go to Schirwan."

On the way he met a wolf. "Where are you bound for?" asked the wolf.

"For Schirwan," answered the fox.

"And why Schirwan?" the wolf went on.

"Oh, because there are a lot of sheep there, and no shepherds guarding them. One can eat there and enjoy oneself; nobody disturbs one there."

"Well, well," said the wolf, "I will go with you."

A little further on they met a mule who asked them where they were going.

"We? To Schirwan."

"What is going on in Schirwan, then?" inquired the mule.

"What is going on there? My good fellow, the grass grows so high in Schirwan that you don't even need to bend down to eat it."

"Really?" said the mule. "Well, if that is the case, I will come with you," and attached himself to the party.

But when the three came to the borders of Daghestan they climbed up a hill. The fox looked round and said: "It is still ten days' journey to Schirwan, and we

have nothing to eat. What shall we do? There is really nothing left for us but to eat the youngest of the party. Each of you must say at once how old you are."

"I," said the wolf, "was born at the time of the prophet Noah."

"You lie," answered the fox, "but that will not save you. As for me, my beard was already white when God created man."

"As for me," said the mule, "I have no idea how old I am. But you can easily find out. Just look at my right hind hoof; my master wrote the date of my birth on it."

"I am a little short-sighted," lied the fox; "you look, wolf, you have better eyes."

The wolf at once put his head down to the mule's hind foot, but got such a tremendous kick that he lost consciousness. "Did I not tell you," the fox said to the wolf, "that lying would not help you?" Then he decided with the mule that they would just stay at the place they had reached; but he took the body of the dead wolf and ate it up.

40. THE WOLF, THE BEAR, THE FOX AND THE DONKEY

A WOLF, a bear and a fox had sworn friendship. One day they learnt that there was a donkey at a certain place, and they made up their minds to entice him to them by cunning in order to eat him up. So they sought him out and promised they would give him six measures of barley at harvest-time if he would allow them to eat him up just now.

"Very good," said the donkey, "I agree to that, but you must not lie to me. You must promise to give me my barley without fail when the time comes."

They killed the donkey beside the fox's lair, and the fox and the bear went down to the river to wash the heart and the lungs. The wolf remained behind.

"Listen," said the fox to the bear. "We will eat the heart and the lungs just now, and if the wolf asks what we have done with them you keep quiet and look at me. I will answer him."

So they ate the heart and the lungs and then went back to the wolf.

"Where is the heart, then? And where are the lungs?" the wolf asked.

The bear kept silent and looked at the fox as they had arranged.

"Just look at that shameless fellow," said the fox, "he ate them up himself, and now he stands there and looks at me as if I . . ." But the wolf had hardly heard that before he flung himself on the bear. He rushed away, and the wolf after him. Then the fox dragged the rest of the donkey down into his hole.

After a time the wolf and the bear came back again and wanted to have their share of the donkey. "There is nothing here," said the fox. "Now you two have quarrelled and perhaps made it up again and arranged together that you will not give me the barley. Get away!"

The wolf and the bear slunk sadly away, because the fox had deceived them so shamefully and they could do nothing to revenge themselves.

41. THE FOX AND THE PARTRIDGE

A HUNGRY fox was once running through a wood when he espied a partridge sitting on a tree. When it saw the fox approaching, it was terrified and uttered a cry. The

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fox sat down under the tree, looked at the partridge in a moving way, and said, "Astonishing! till to-day I thought you partridges cried with your throats; but now it appears you cry with your eyes." "No, fox, you are mistaken," the partridge replied, "we cry with our throats and not with our eyes." "You don't know what you are saying," said the fox. "If you don't believe me then come down, I will hold your eyes shut, and if you really cry with your throat, then you will be right." "But I am afraid of you," said the partridge, "you will eat me up."

"Certainly not, partridge," the fox replied earnestly. "I swore as long ago as last year that I would not eat any more of your race; if I break my oath, then may I die of mange."

The partridge trusted the fox and flew down off the tree. The fox at once seized it by the legs and laughed at it heartily: "How stupid you really are! As if anyone could believe the smallest word I said! Now I will eat you up." "No, fox," said the partridge, "you must wait a moment. You must not eat me up till you have said *Bism'illahi*, '*rrahmâni*, '*rrahîmi*¹—then I will last you for a whole year." The fox believed that, opened his jaws to speak and . . . the partridge was away!

"How stupid I was," said the fox to himself, "I must think of something else." So he pretended to be ill, whimpered and groaned, and rolled about under the tree. But not for long, for the sound of huntsmen came to his ears. "What din is that?" asked the fox. "Oh, that is nothing," answered the partridge, "only the shepherds chasing a wolf." But at that very moment the hounds flung themselves on the fox, who just

¹ Arabic = "In the name of God, the All-Merciful." The Tchetchens, from whom this fable comes, are of course Mahometans.

managed to escape by the skin of his teeth. But he had to leave his tail behind him to one of the hounds. Tired and hungry, tailless and with aching bones, he sat down and pondered over the whole affair: "It is a scandal! Did my forebears say *Bism'illahi*, '*rrahmâni*, '*rrahîmi*, when they undertook anything? A partridge has got the better of me. Life is no longer worth living."

42. THE KID, THE LAMB AND THE CALF

A SHEPHERD was once taking his flocks out to pasture, but lost on the way a kid, a lamb and a calf. When evening came on, the three lay down together at a certain place. But a bear, a wolf and a fox were living quite near. And at night the bear and the wolf sent the fox to ask the three if they could give them a little bit of meat for supper. The fox delivered his message, but the kid replied: "We were just going to ask you for something to eat. This evening as I was looking for a nice place for my friends to spend the night, a fox came up to them—or perhaps it was a wolf, they do not remember exactly—and they tore him to pieces and ate him up: there was only a leg left over, which I ate when I came back. But we are still hungry! Just think of it, fox! I swear to you by my very life we have not the tiniest morsel left." The fox became anxious and afraid when he heard this, and he began slowly to back away from the kid, and the kid had hardly finished his story before the fox with one great leap sprang into the wood and disappeared. He even forgot all about his companions, the bear and the wolf. They waited for a long time, but as the fox never turned up, the wolf went over to the three strangers—"Who are you, then?"

he asked. "Are you perhaps a ruling people? We sent the fox over to you to get us something to eat, why did you not give him anything?"

"Yes, well, I was just going to beg the same favour from you," answered the kid. "This evening as I was looking for quarters for the night for my companions, a wolf came up to them—or perhaps it was a bear, they cannot remember exactly—they tore him in pieces and ate him up. There was only a leg left over, which I ate when I came back. But we are still hungry. Wolf, I swear to you by my life, not a morsel remains."

The wolf got frightened while the kid was telling this story, and began to draw back. No sooner had the kid finished his tale than the wolf reached the wood in a great spring, and disappeared into it. He forgot all about his companion the bear, who waited for a long time, but as neither the fox nor the wolf came back, he went himself to the strangers.

"What are you doing here," he asked, "and what right have you to settle down here? I sent my comrades to ask you for a piece of meat. Where is the meat and where are my friends?"

"I was just going to ask you for the same thing," answered the kid. "This evening as I was looking for quarters for the night for my friends, a bear came up to them—or perhaps it was a wolf—and they tore it in pieces, and ate it up; there was only a leg left over for me. But we are all still hungry."

The bear became just as anxious and alarmed during the telling of this story as the fox and the wolf had been; he did just as they did at the end, and ran away into the wood.

"Now," the kid said to his friends, "they are sure to meet each other in the wood, and if they learn from

each other how we have lied to them, then they will come back and eat us up! Come, let us go away from here."

So they went into the wood and found a crooked tree. The kid and the lamb climbed up it; but the calf could not climb, and so they put it up on the lowest branch. But in the meantime the fox, the wolf and the bear had met in the wood and had heard from each other how they had been deceived by the kid, the lamb and the calf. And they determined to seek them out. First of all they went to the place where the three had pitched their camp for the night, but found no one there. Then they followed their tracks and came to the crooked tree. When the calf saw the three wild beasts, it was terrified and almost fell off its branch, but the kid saw its danger and called out to it: "You, calf, you take the biggest; I will seize the wolf and tear him to pieces, and you, lamb, you can catch the fox." The bear, the wolf and the fox thought these creatures really possessed supernatural powers and ran off into the depths of the wood.

But the kid, the lamb and the calf spent the night peacefully under the tree. Next morning their shepherd found them and drove them back to his flock.

43. THE GREY WOLF

EARLY one morning the grey wolf met the badger. "May your path be straight, badger," the wolf called in greeting. The badger was not a little alarmed when he so suddenly ran against the wolf, and muttered, "May your affairs prosper, grey wolf." "Whither away, badger?" asked the wolf. "Where have you been since

last night?" "I have been looking for you," answered the badger. "Ah, you dog, you liar! But I will eat you all the same," threatened the wolf. "I am not worth your while," said the badger. "That does not matter," replied the wolf. "I will make two mouthfuls of you." "Ah, grey wolf, you don't even know how your forefathers set about eating a badger. Would you like to know? This was how they did it. Before they ate the badger, they seized him by the neck and threw him three times up the road and three times down the road, and then only did they begin to enjoy him." "Yes, but I can do that too," said the wolf, seized the badger, threw him first up the road, then down the road, and . . . the badger was gone! He was safely in his hole. The wolf stuck his head in and shouted, "What, you want to deceive me?" "Yes, my forefathers deceived you just in the same way," answered the badger. "I will tell you what," said the wolf, "we will arrange it differently. Come out and we will be friends. I will put a soft mattress under you, a pillow under your head, and will cover you with a red silk coverlet." "No, no, wolf," said the badger, "you won't catch me that way. I know your mattress; you will make it out of my own flesh. And I know your pillow; you will cut off my head and lay it under me. And my bloodstained skin will provide the red silk coverlet, is that not so? No, you will certainly not deceive me that way!"

But the grey wolf died of rage.

44. NEIGHBOURING CAMPS

A BEAR, a wolf and a pig lived at one place, a lamb, a kid and a hen at another. Now the fire in the first party's house went out, and they sent the wolf to bring fire from their neighbours. The wolf ran over and cried, "Hi! you there, give me fire!" But the neighbours were frightened and ran away. Only the lamb was courageous and answered the wolf, "Come in, why do you stay out there in front of the door? Here is a piece of wolf-meat for you, eat it, and then you can take the fire."

"But where did you get the wolf-meat?" asked the wolf. "Our kid with the two horns kills wolves for us, and we do enjoy them." The wolf did not wait to hear any more: he ran as fast as he could to his own house and sent the bear over.

The bear came and called out when he drew near the neighbours' house, "Hi! you there, give me fire!" Again they were all terrified, but the lamb took courage and answered the bear. "Just come in. Here is a little bit of bear-meat for you. After you have eaten it you can take the fire." "Well, but where did you get the bear-meat?" "Our kid with the two horns gets it for us, and we do enjoy it tremendously." The bear made off at once, because he was afraid the kid would kill him too. So he ran home and sent the pig over to the neighbours.

So the pig went over and asked for fire. Again the neighbours were alarmed—"He will eat us up, that bristle-carrier," they said to each other—but the lamb had courage and said, "Why do you not come in? Look at this lovely pork, how fat it is. Eat some of it and then take the fire." "Where did you get the pork?" "Oh, our little kid with the two horns gets that for us, and we

like it very much!" answered the lamb. But the pig ran away as fast as he could, ran home and told his friends what he had heard. "But the lamb said the same to me," the wolf expostulated; "that kid will not give us any peace, it will be sure to kill us. Do you know what? We will go over and listen to what they are saying to each other."

So all three went over. The kid had stuck its nose up in the air and was chewing its cud, the lamb was looking timidly round in every direction, and the hen was cackling. "The kid there is watching us from above," said the bear. "And the lamb is watching us too," said the wolf; and the pig remarked, "I know what the hen is saying there, it is threatening us, it would eat us up if it could catch us!" Then they all three ran away and hid themselves under an overhanging rock, but the other three also ran away and happened to stand on the rock just above where the others were hiding. The kid looked down and said, "Look, there are our enemies. Now they will eat us up." . . . The kid slipped on the smooth rock and fell down in front of the other three. "Tackle one of them and leave the other two to us," the lamb cried after him. But the wolf screamed, "Run, run, here is the kid already!" And wolf and bear and pig jumped up and fell over the edge of the precipice.

45. THE WOLF, THE FOX AND THE CAMEL

A WOLF, a fox and a camel had sworn friendship and had agreed to share their spoil in equal portions. After a long search they at last found a small loaf. As they were all very hungry, and as if they divided it only a tiny

morsel would be left for each, they agreed that the eldest should have the loaf.

"I am the only wolf that Noah invited into the Ark," said the wolf, "all the others were drowned in the Flood. Hand over the bread: I am the eldest."

"Not so fast, not so fast," cried the fox. "How can you tell such a story? You were not yet born when God created me, the first fox. How often Adam and Eve have stroked my back and called me the ideal pattern for a clever animal."

"Really?" said the wolf. "But why did I not see you in the Ark?"

"Because I was lying at Noah's feet. He would not let me go away into the division where all the other animals were."

The wolf was silent. But the camel, who had found no words in which to establish his age, seized the loaf, lifted his head in the air, and said, "I see you regard me as a little child. Where do you think that I was, then?" So saying he ate the bread, and the wolf and the fox looked on amazed.

III.—NART SAGAS

46. THE BIRTH OF BATRÁS

WHEN Chämýts was on the Balz¹ he met a youth. He asked if he might travel for three days in his company. Chämýts agreed and the two set out together. But when night came they had nothing to eat. Then the youth said to Chämýts, "If we lie down hungry, we won't sleep. You stay here with the horses. I will get something." Then he scrambled up the mountain and drove the game before him; he killed the best he saw, and slinging it on his back, drove the rest towards Chämýts. He, however, had gone to sleep in the meantime. "I thought you were more manly than that," said the youth reproachfully, but served him that evening all the same.

When morning came the youth said to Chämýts, "I cannot get on with you," and left him. Afterwards Chämýts was sorry he had not asked the boy where he had come from, "For," he thought, "a maiden of that race would have made a good wife for me." So he called after him, "Youth, look here! I want to ask you something." The youth stood still till Chämýts came nearer and asked him what tribe he belonged to, for he would like to court a maiden of that tribe. "I belong to the tribe of Chädmäst-Psäl. I have a sister and we will give her to you. But if anyone reproaches her, she will either

¹ *Balz* signifies the warlike and plundering expeditions of the Narts, or any long absence from home with the intention of travel, such as visiting relations, bringing home salt, and so on.

kill herself or you will have to take her back to her parents' house." Chämýts agreed to that, accompanied the youth to his home, courted the maiden, pulled out the price of his bride from his pocket and paid at once. Then he took his wife with him up to a copper tower, where they lived for some time.

But when did Syrdon ever let an opportunity slip of doing harm to the Narts? This was no exception. One morning he came over, looked up at Chämýts' wife and cried, "Hullo, you wretched creature, miserable woman! Was your like ever to be found with the Narts before? How long are you going to sit up there? Why do you not come down?"

And the wife sought her husband and said to him in a weeping tone of voice, "Syrdon is your black sheep,¹ and as he has insulted me I cannot stay here any longer. Take me back to my parents' house. I should have borne you a son, the like of whom has never been seen on this earth. I will blow him in between your shoulders. You will get a swelling there; count the months, and when the time has come, let it be opened. A boy will come out of it; throw him at once into the sea."

Then Chämýts took his wife back to her parents' house. But when his back between his shoulders began to swell, the Narts were sorry for him because they thought it was an abscess. Chämýts counted the months, and as the time drew near he went into his copper tower, called Soslan to him and ordered him to cut open the swelling. When the little boy came out they carried him to the sea and threw him in. All at once he became as big as a mountain. The Mysyrbi and the Badri of the

¹ In ancient Ossetia there were various social classes: *Sauläg* meant literally Black Man. This class was between the slaves and the *äldars*, or nobles; they were free-men, only a few who had settled on the land of the *äldars* paid tribute to them for it.

race of Bora came to the sea-shore and asked the youth to be so good as to throw them out some of the oxen that were in the sea. But the youth said: "Bring Urýsmäg here to me, shave his head, and when you have done that, then I will throw oxen out to you and come out myself." So they went to Urýsmäg and told him the whole story.

The next morning Urýsmäg got up and went with them to the sea-shore. And there they shaved his head. But Batrás—for that was the name of the youth—Batrás rose up out of the sea and said: "Are you not ashamed of yourselves, to shave his head?" seized a sea-ox with each hand, came ashore, pulled a razor out of his pocket, and shaved Urýsmäg again. Then he commanded his father's horse to be brought, so that he could ride home. It was brought, but when he mounted, he pressed so hard on the horse's ribs with his knees that they gave way and the animal died. "Bring me Urýsmäg's horse," said Batrás. But this animal too could hardly carry him. When he got home he said, "Well, as I am now flesh and bone, I cannot make war with the others. I will have myself steeled." As he spoke he put sixty tuman¹ in his pocket and went to Kurdälägon² and said, "May God give us His blessing! Steel me, that I become as steel."

"I would gladly do it," answered Kurdälägon, "but you would be burned up." "Whatever happens to me," replied Batrás, "I must be steeled without fail."

Then Kurdälägon fetched stones, built an oven, lighted a fire and blew into it from one Saturday to the next. "Now I will see what has become of Batrás," he

¹ The tuman, originally a Persian coin, is now nominally ten roubles in the Caucasus.

² The mythical smith of the Ossetes: he lives either in heaven or among the dead.

said then. He looked in and behold, Batrás was sitting in the fire looking at him. "No, no," he said. "If you are going to steel me, do it properly. If not, do not jest with me, but give me a Fändýr¹ to play." So Kurdálägon began again to steel Batrás, and blew on his fire for another whole week. Then when he looked in Batrás said, "Be merciful! Throw me into the sea."

Kurdálägon did that and the sea dried up from the heat; for a whole week there was no water in it. But when Batrás came out of the sea, the water came back.

47. THE DEATH OF CHÄMÝTS

A CERTAIN malik lived in the town of Tynty. One day Chämýts came to him and said, "Here we are, sir. We Narts are the rulers of the whole world." Then the malik commanded his servants, "Bring that son of a dog here—he who said that there were no rulers in the world except the Narts."

But Chämýts killed all those whom the malik sent to take him, and even sent the malik a message that within a week he must betake himself to the Kabardian plain, and leave the territory of the Narts.

Three days before this truce was up the malik considered the matter. "Yes," he thought, "Chämýts is strong. I had better ask a wise woman; perhaps she will be able to tell me some means of getting the better of him." The wise woman was willing to help him and said, "Chämýts' horse is of a fiendish brood; take a wolf-skin, hang it round the neck of your own horse, then Chämýts' horse will not be able to show itself in front of you."

¹ A two-stringed instrument like a guitar.

The malik followed this advice and met Chämýts at the place they had decided on. But Chämýts' horse would not turn its face toward the malik, but turned round and flew away at the gallop, and Chämýts could not hold it. But the malik overtook him, killed him, and bound his dead body firmly on to his horse. It ran home with the body to Chämýts' castle, stood at the door and neighed.

"That is the neigh of our horse," said the relatives of the dead man. "It is surely back too soon." And as they went out they saw what had happened, the horse stood there with the body.

"If you have been killed from behind," they said, "may you be happy in the Underworld.¹ But if you were killed from in front, then may the devil fetch you! But no one could have conquered you from in front; they must have killed you from behind by cunning." And now the Narts decided they must make war against the malik of the town of Tynty, but they could not do it at once, because Batrás was not there. He was at that time, in fact, with Kurdälägon. But they assembled their armies at once and sent the evening wind to the morning wind with the message that the morning wind was to go to Batrás and say to him: "The malik has killed your father, and we are going to attack Tynty. If you are sitting down, stand up and come; if you are standing, do not sit down again, but come quickly." When Batrás heard from the morning wind that his father had been killed, he stood up to put on his armour. But his sweetheart had hidden it in the sleeping-chamber. Batrás broke open the door, went in and fetched his weapons, his sword and his shield. When he came down

¹ This gives the meaning of the phrase which the Ossetes call out to the dead as a wish or greeting.

from heaven to earth he was burning; he broke off half a glacier and put it on his head. Then he went to the Narts. "What do you want me for?" he asked. "Are you joking with me? When was any man stronger than Chämýts?" "Why should we not tell you?" the Narts answered, "the malik of Tynty has killed your father."

And Batrás made ready to avenge his father.

48. BATRÁS AVENGES THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER

BATRÁS went with his whole army to the town of Tynty, to avenge the death of his father. His followers began to fight, each one for himself. Then Batrás said: "If you are not just playing yourselves, then go and fetch twelve pairs of oxen and drag my cannon here; then we will see what happens." The cannon was brought there: twelve measures of powder were shaken into it. Then Batrás loaded himself into the cannon and said to the gunner who was taking aim: "Aim well on to the town and shoot!" The shot was fired, and Batrás was in the town and began to tear down the houses. Then he sought the malik, but no one would show him his house, and whosoever refused Batrás slew. At last he found the house himself. "Be merciful," said the malik, "do not kill me, I will pay whatever you ask as ransom." "It is you I have sought," answered Batrás. "It is you I want, and I will take neither oxen nor gold instead, for my father's life." So saying, he struck off the malik's head and took it with him. And all that he found in Tynty, young men and maidens and all kinds of beautiful things, he took with him. When he got home, he took the malik's head to the graveyard and hung it on a pole

above the head of his father's grave.¹ Then he called his Narts together and held a sacrificial feast.

"I have avenged my father," he said. He kept the Narts for a whole week by him, and all that time they spent in banqueting.

49. GOD SLAYS BATRÁS

BATRÁS once said, "Here upon the earth I can do nothing. I will rather go back to my own abode." So saying he set out to go to heaven. But as he journeyed he met the seven Uátsillas.² "I was looking for you," he said, aimed at them, and four of them were dead; the other three went to God and complained to Him of Batrás. But God would not listen to them. Then Batrás left heaven again to look for the Uástyrdji.³ He met them on the way, shot at them, killed three of them, and the other four went to God to make their complaint. But God did not listen to them either.

¹ Both the refusal to accept weregild and the offering of the head of the enemy on the grave of the murdered man are genuine old Caucasian customs. The weregild varied according to the standing of the murdered man, but the payment was always in cows, at least with the Tagauro-Kurtatinians and the Alagiromamissonians. The payment for an áldar (noble) was generally 240 oxen from the Tagauro-Kurtatinians, from the Alagirians it was 342 cows, from the Mamissonians 486 cows.

² Uátsilla is the God of Thunder and Frightfulness. The prefix *uats* stands perhaps for holy, and *illa* for Elias. We have evidently to do with a very ancient mythological personality here, who through the influence of Christianity has approached to the personality of a Christian saint, for similar Gods of Thunder and Frightfulness are known by other Caucasian peoples. Seven Uátsillas appear in the Nart Sagas. The early heathen deities were transformed by the Christians and Mahometans among the Ossetes into angels and messengers from Heaven.

³ The Uástyrdji is the enemy of thieves, villains, perjurers. He rides on a white horse. The name is formed from *uats*, holy, and *tyrdji*, George.

Then the Uátsillas and the Uástýrdjis met and took counsel together. "Why should we not kill Batrás, if God will not listen to our wrongs?" they asked. And when they caught sight of him on the plain of Chásma they shot at him. "Hullo," said Batrás, "what is happening now? Is it snowing, or are my enemies fighting with me? Perhaps, after all, it is my enemies." He took some bullets, fired at them, hit seven—the four Uástýrdji and three Tbauátsillas.¹ Those that remained went again to God and complained. "Choose between us which you will," they said, "either us or Batrás." "I can do nothing without you," said God, and sent Batrás away to the Kabardian Plain, and after him he sent the Balsäg wheel.²

When Batrás saw it coming, he knew what was before him. "So God intends to kill me," he said, "otherwise he would not have sent the Balsäg wheel after me."

When Batrás had himself coated with steel by Kur-dälägon, a small part of him had remained uncovered. That now began to burn, Batrás fell to the ground, and the wheel passed over him to and fro. Batrás died.

"Now I have killed my own son," said God, "who will carry him to the Sopia cave?"³ Here, you angels, you complained of Batrás; go now and carry his body to the Sopia cave." But as they stood beside the body of Batrás, he let his spirit loose upon them; sixty of them died of it, and the rest went again to God to complain. "Ah," they said, "what damage his life did us! But his death is still worse." "That was my doing, that he let

¹ *Tba* signifies ark. These were possibly sea or water spirits.

² Also called the Malsädji or Barsädji wheel. It is in the service of God and of John the Baptist, and cuts in pieces him against whom it is sent out.

³ No one knows where this tomb is. Is it perhaps an ancient church in honour of holy wisdom or Sophia?

his spirit loose upon you," answered God; "go and bury him where I told you." "We will never master him," said the angels. "Leave that to me," said God. When they had carried the body to the cave, Batrás resisted with both feet and would not go in. "Why will you not go into the cave, then?" the angels asked him. "How should I wish to go in, when I cannot see God," answered Batrás. Then God came to him and said, "My son,¹ why do you not obey?" "Because I did not see you," answered Batrás. Then God let three tears fall upon Batrás, and the first became Tarandjälös, the second Mykaly-Gäbyrta, and the third Pekom.² Then they laid Batrás in the cave where he is to this day.

50. BATRÁS AND BÄDSÄNÄG

ONCE upon a time Batrás sat in heaven beside Kur-dälägon. The Narts gathered together by the Saqola river, where they played and danced. Bäd-sänäg, the son of the blind giant, looked down upon them from a mountain-top, and said to himself, "I will go down there! The Narts are playing. I will go and steal away their things and do them ill." The blind giant warned his son, "Do not do that! do not go! One of the Boras is sure to come and harm you." But the father warned him in vain; Bäd-sänäg climbed down, went to the Narts, and played and danced with them. Then he took their things away from them and went home with them. The next morning he did the same thing. But Batrás watched him

¹ In the Ossetian form this reads *Son called by my name*, that is, *not of my body*.

² Three sanctuaries. The first has a Georgian name, *mihavar-angeloz*, i.e. the archangel, but no one knows where it is to be found. The two others are not far from Zei-Gletscher.

from heaven and said, "There is a giant dancing and playing among my people." He left heaven and rushed down to earth; he put half a glacier on his head, otherwise he would have been burned up. The water ran down from his head like a spring as he came near Bādsänäg. He looked at Batrás, and remembered the words of his father. Batrás allowed him to dance three times more, but the fourth time he pulled off one of his legs, struck him into the ground up to his middle, and then, seizing him by one arm, tore away one entire side. Bādsänäg flew. As his sister saw him coming from afar she said, "God be thanked, there is my brother coming up, and he is dressed in the red garments of the Narts." "What kind of red clothes he has," replied her father, "you will soon see." In the meantime Bādsänäg had arrived home without one arm and one whole side. "Wherein lies the strength of Batrás?" he asked his father. "Batrás had himself cased in steel, that is his strength," was the answer. "Blind donkey! Why did you not have me cased in steel?" asked Bādsänäg. Then he put twelve tuman (coins) in his pocket and went to Kurdälägon: "Steel me as you steelled Batrás," he said. "You will not stand it," Kurdälägon replied, "you will be burned up." "That will not harm you, anyway," said Bādsänäg; "here are twelve tuman, steel me." Kurdälägon put him in the red-hot furnace, put stones on the top and began to blow. As the flames leapt up, Bādsänäg began to scream: "I am burning, Kurdälägon! Take me out!" But Kurdälägon only found his bones, which he threw away.

51. SÓSRYQO

SÓSRYQO belonged to the race of the Bora, but was not brought up by his father and mother. Satána was a good wife, and each of the angels¹ said: "How willingly would I take Satána for my beloved!"

One day Satána washed her clothes and spread them out on a stone to dry. Then Uástyrdji came and sat down on the stone. And the stone on which the clothing lay became fertile. Satána learned what Uástyrdji had done; she counted the months, and when the time was come she cut open the stone and Sósryqo came out of it. He looked like ice, and at once began to play. Once he played with the three sons of Buráfárnäygs; by midday he had won and cut the right arm off each of the sons. The next day he came again and said to the youths: "If you win to-day cut off my moustache, but if I win I will do the same to you."

By midday he had won; he cut off their moustaches and took them home. The next morning he came again and said to his comrades: "To-day it shall be the right eye; if I win, I will take your right eyes; if you win, you will do the same to me." But when midday came, Sósryqo had won and took an eye out of each of the youths. Then their mother came and said to Sósryqo: "On the Field of Chásma behind the Black Sea lives Eltaghan, the son of Kutsyg. His skull is of gold. If you are strong, Sósryqo, go and kill Eltaghan, pull off his scalp and have a collar made out of it for your fur cape."

When Sósryqo heard that, he became sorrowful and said to himself: "I must go to Eltaghan without fail."

¹ In this sense the word means the helper or messenger of God.

He set out and came to the house of Eltaghan. He was looking out of the window and said, "Good journey, honoured guest, where have you come from?" "I have heard of your fame; that is why I have come to you," answered Sósryqo. Eltaghan killed a golden sheep, treated Sósryqo with befitting hospitality and said: "Guest! is Sósryqo really so strong that one can call him a strong man?" "Why should Sósryqo not be strong?" said he. "If you load two bullets in a gun and hit him on the breast, the bullets will fall down off him like pears." "Dear guest," said Eltaghan, "you have a gun too, which seems to me not to be a bad one. Load it with two bullets and shoot me in the breast, I should like to see if the bullets will go in." Sósryqo loaded his gun heavily and fired, and the bullets fell to the ground as if they had been pears. "How otherwise does Sósryqo's strength show itself?" asked Eltaghan. "If you sharpen a sword and grip it with both hands, and smite his head with it, you cannot even cut through two of his hairs." "Dear guest," said Eltaghan, "you also have a sword, that looks to me as if it were a right trusty weapon. Try it on me." Sósryqo stood up, drew his sword, struck hard, but could not even cut through two hairs with it. And again Eltaghan asked for new examples of Sósryqo's strength. "If you dug a hole in winter," said he, "and let the waters of the Terek into it, if you then put Sósryqo into the hole for a week, and the water froze, yet he would break through with his head, so strong is he." "Well," said Eltaghan, "dig me a hole, put me in it, let in the waters of the Terek, and let the water freeze; we will see whether I cannot break through it." That was done. When the water in the hole was hard frozen, Sósryqo challenged Eltaghan to break through. He gave one push and shoved his head through; but his shoulders remained

fast in the ice. "Heave away, heave away," Sósryqo encouraged him, "it will soon break." "No, I cannot break it," answered Eltaghan. "Now what do you think? Will my sword cut off your head? Listen! I myself am Sósryqo, believe me." So saying, he drew his sword and tried to strike off Eltaghan's head. But he could not. "Be merciful," Eltaghan implored: "do not tease me. Fetch my own sword and strike off my head with it." So Sósryqo fetched the sword and said, "Strength you certainly have, and if you had only as much intelligence, no one could overcome you. But in intelligence I am your superior." Then he struck off his head, but in falling it seized with its teeth the handle of Sósryqo's sword. He ran away as fast as he could, but the head followed him. But soon the head became cold, and then the sword fell out of its mouth. When Sósryqo saw that, he stopped and pulled the scalp off the head. And everything he found in Eltaghan's house he took with him. Then he called all the young girls and young women out of the hall of the Narts and commanded them to sew him a fur-collar out of the scalp and the moustache. When they saw these things, one said, "That is the scalp of my father"; another, "That is the moustache of my brother"; a third, "That is the scalp of my husband." And they all promised to come to begin the work next morning.

They came and cut out the collar. Then they went to a witch and asked for her advice. "We have cut out a collar for Sósryqo from the scalps of our fathers, the moustaches of our brothers, and the scalps of our husbands. Now we want to outwit him, and have come to ask you what we should do." "Leave his fur without a collar," said the witch, "and when you are finished say, 'Your fur is very fine, but it still wants a collar; you

must bring the scalp of Mukkára, the son of Táryk—it is said to be of gold—and then your fur will be ready.’” And the maidens did as the witch told them.

Sósryqo set out on his journey. When he came to Mukkára, he called out to him: “Mukkára, are you at home?” When he heard this call, he said to himself: “That is Sósryqo’s voice. Go and tell him I am not at home.” “No? well then, find him for me at any price,” said Sósryqo, when this message was brought him. Then Mukkára came out himself and asked Sósryqo why he sought him, and what he wanted from him. “We will throw the dice on the Sakola road,” answered Sósryqo: “if you win, you may cut off my head; if I win, then your head belongs to me.” Mukkára agreed to this; they went on to the Sakola road and Sósryqo said Mukkára must throw first. “No,” he answered, “you have come here and challenged me, so you must throw first.” Sósryqo did so, and there fell out of the dice-box as much millet as a man could thresh in three days. “We must gather up the millet,” said Sósryqo. Then Mukkára threw his dice, and so many chickens fell out of it that there was not even a grain of millet for each of them. “Now you throw next,” said Sósryqo. Again a dice fell, and a boar came out of it and ran into the grass. Then Sósryqo threw and three hounds sprang out of the dice, rushed after the boar and brought it back in pieces to Mukkára. “Now it is your turn again,” said he. Sósryqo threw his dice, and the houses of the Narts began to burn. “Now you must help them,” said Sósryqo. But Mukkára had to admit that he could do nothing for them—“Do with me what you will,” he added. “Look here,” said Sósryqo, he threw his dice, rain fell and quenched the fire. “Cut off my head, Sósryqo, you have won,” said Mukkára. “No, throw

once more, I will allow you another try," said Sósryqo. Mukkára did so, and three doves flew out of his dice. "Catch them," he said to Sósryqo. He threw his dice, three sparrow-hawks flew after the doves, caught them, brought them to Mukkára and killed them. "Cut off my head, you have won," Mukkára said again. But Sósryqo would not. "You are a brave man, I do not want to cut off your head," he said, pulled off his scalp, and put healing herbs on his head. And a new scalp grew on his head and he recovered. But Sósryqo carried Mukkára's scalp home, and the young women and the maidens made him a collar out of it for his fur.

52. CHÄMÝTS, SÓSRÝQO AND URÝSMÄG

CHÄMÝTS, Sósryqo and Urýsmäg were divided in their opinion as to which of them was the eldest and which the youngest. They agreed to go to their eldest sister in the town of Tynty and ask her about it. When they set out, they put their saddle-bags on Chämýts' horse. When they arrived at the house of their sister, they challenged her to come out. She ran out and invited them to come into the sleeping-chamber. Then she prepared food for them and treated them hospitably. "We did not come without a reason," said one of the three. "What do you want me to do?" asked the sister. "We have disagreed as to which of us is the eldest and which the youngest," they replied. "Do you really not know that? He who has the saddle-bags behind him on his horse, he is the youngest." Chämýts was angry and cursed her: "For telling that lie, may the brown donkey of the Boras trample on you, for I am not the youngest." (When the brown donkey of the Boras was mentioned

in this way, it usually ran by immediately after with a joyful *hee-haw*.) "Be merciful," implored his sister, "do not let the donkey come to me and I will give you anything you like." "Give me the tooth of Arqys," said Chämýts. She gave him the tooth and he stuck it in among his own. But this tooth had the virtue for its possessor that the woman he loved, even if she had no love for him, must give herself up to him. But if the possessor of the tooth did not want to have anything to do with her, then she turned herself into a serpent. Now when Chämýts had got the tooth, he did not let the donkey harm his sister.

The Alägas were celebrating a marriage; for they had a grown-up daughter. Chämýts had already sent deputy suitors to her; but she had repulsed them all, and he was angry with her. When she heard that Chämýts was in possession of the tooth, she became alarmed. So she hid herself from him. But Chämýts knew a way to get near her; he wrapped himself in a cloth and sprang into a pool of mud. The people who saw him do that were sorry for him, and even the daughter of the Alägas saw him out of her window and said, "The poor man!" When Chämýts saw her, he showed his tooth and cursed her: "Your house shall fall in on you," he said.¹ "Woe me," she said, "he has come from whom I had so guarded myself." But Chämýts rode home, and the maiden changed herself into a serpent. Then the Alägas begged Chämýts to be merciful and come to their daughter, they would give him as much gold as he could drag away. "Even if I were to die rather, I would not come to your daughter," answered Chämýts. But when two years had passed, he began to be sorry for her; he went to her, took out his tooth and rubbed her with it. She

¹ One of the most dreaded maledictions.

recovered her human form, became more beautiful than before, and Chämýts took her for his beloved. As they lay together Chämýts said, "You did not want me, and you have paid for that with two years' misery." "Yes, but I could not help that!" answered the maiden. "At any rate you sat in a pool of mud on my account."

53. URÝSMÄG AND SÓSRYQO

THE Narts were holding a meeting. Urýsmäg and Sósryqo were quarrelling as to which of them was the bravest, and as to whose wife was the best. When Sósryqo woke the next morning he repented. "God will send a curse upon me," he said. "I handled my elders disrespectfully, I lashed them as with a whip, so bitterly did I insult them. How can I show myself again to the Narts? I will rather go and search for death, otherwise my shame will be too great for me to bear." Then he got up, took his horse, put on his armour and mounted. "It is death I seek," he said again and rode off.

Satána was a good wife. As she was sweeping the road that morning she met Sósryqo. "Whither away, my hero?" she asked him. "To seek death," was the answer. "Ah," bewailed Satána, "if he goes away the half of our glory is gone. May my house fall to pieces, rather." She saddled Durdura, Urýsmäg's horse, and rode off to her brother-in-law, who lived in the town of Tynty. "Perhaps he may succeed in persuading Sósryqo against his present intention," she thought.

Her brother-in-law at once put on his grave-clothes,¹

¹ In Ossetia one prepares one's grave-clothes in good time. Many even put them on at the commencement of any dangerous undertaking.

saddled his war-horse, and rode after Sósryqo. He overtook him on the plain of Färdyg. "Sósryqo," he said, "turn back, for if you do not, then I will die with you!" "You are a donkey, Färsagläg,"¹ Sósryqo answered, "how dare you follow me?" But they rode on together and came, without exchanging a single word, to Jelu-säned.² Arrived there, Sósryqo hastened to the river, but his brother-in-law Tschilächsärton was quicker and got first into the water. "God shall not hear you," said Sósryqo; "what will you offer me to give up my search?" "You shall not turn back without reward," he replied; "come home with me, we have a sister whom even the angels court. We will give her to you."

So they turned back and came to the house of Tschilächsärton, who said to his sister, "Sister, I have found you a good husband." "Who is he?" she asked. "He belongs to the tribe of the Narts. He is Sósryqo." Then the maiden began to weep, and said she would not marry a Nart. Sósryqo was enraged when he heard this, he went home, stood in the midst of the assemblage of Narts and cried, "Narts! My soul is sick within me. Tschilächsärton's sister will have none of me." Then they sent out a crier to call all the Narts together; none might stay behind, save where there were three in a house, then one might stay at home, but where there were only two, both had to come. And next morning the troop was marshalled together.

But in the night a witch had given birth to a little boy, and when Urýsmäg was inspecting his troops next morning the little fellow came running up and wanted to go with the others. Urýsmäg said to him, "You were

¹ The son of a noble and a woman of lower birth.

² The teller of this story said that Jelu-säned was the place from which people came when God first created them. But it is almost certainly derived from Jerusalem.

born last night, and to-day already you wish to go to the field of battle?" "I will give you as much help as a hundred men," the child answered. "Who will hold my horse?" called Urýsmäg. "I," called the little fellow. "You?" said Urýsmäg; "but my horse is not easy to hold." "I will hold it, however," said the boy.

"How then will you hold it?" Urýsmäg asked further. "If it tears away the reins, how will you hold it then?" "By its tail." "And if it tears that away too?" "Then by its mane." "And if it gets away in spite of that?" "Then I will hold it by its feet and throw it to the ground."

When the battle began, the boy said to Urýsmäg, "I will either attack the enemy as they come out of the mountain or else fight with the army." "If you will do me a service," answered Urýsmäg, "this would be useful. There is a mountain above the enemy, if you can attack him from there I shall be well pleased." The boy changed himself into a black hen, flew to the top of the mountain, and with one scrape of his claw broke loose a great piece of rock. It fell down and destroyed half of the enemy's houses and many of his people. But Tschilächsärton had got three arrows from God. Now when he caught sight of the boy up there on the top of the mountain he said, "That is curious. There is something like a black raven sitting up there. It has destroyed my town and killed many of my people. O God! As Thou hast given me these arrows, let me hit what sits up there and looks like a raven." He fired and hit the boy in the knee. In olden times when anyone was carried over three valleys he became immortal. So Urýsmäg invited the boy to get on his back and he carried him over two valleys. But Syrdon always gave bad counsel to the Narts, and

now he jeered at Urysmäg. "Aha! they have struck a hard blow at the head of our army, and now you carry the son of a witch on your back." Whenever Urysmäg heard that, he threw the boy down from him, and he died at once. Batrás, the son of Chämyts, looked down from heaven and said, "The Narts certainly fight well, but against Tschilächsärton they can do nothing." Then he flew down from heaven to the Narts. "The smoke from your weapons is good," he said, "but you have not yet done any damage to the town of your adversaries. Go, fetch me cannons, then you shall see!" They went to do his bidding, but neither by manpower nor with the help of oxen could they move the cannons from the place where they were. "And you want to make war!" said Batrás. He went himself, took a cannon on his back, and carried it to the field of battle. Then he loaded himself into the cannon and had it fired. When he landed in the enemy town Tschilächsärton's daughter came to him and begged him to have mercy and not to harm them. She would agree to marry his brother. "Whether you will or not," said Batrás, "you will marry him. I will not hurt you, but I will carry off the half of everything that is in the town." And the Narts took away people and gold, and Sósryqo took his bride. And they rested in Sósryqo's house after the battle.

54. THE BIRTH OF SATÁNA

THE mother of the race of Bóra was called Satána. One day Uástyrdji sent a messenger to say to her, "I want you for my beloved." She sent him an answer that she would have nothing to do with anyone but her

own husband. Uástyrdji answered: "Even if it is as a dead woman, I will still have you." Now as Satána lay dying she commanded her three sons, Chämýts, Urýsmäg and Sósryqo,¹ to watch by her grave. The first night after her death, Urýsmäg kept watch. At midnight Uástyrdji came, day dawned, the sun rose, and the people drove their flocks out to pasture. But Urýsmäg was not to be deceived. "You sly fellow," he said to Uástyrdji, "you cannot take me in that way." And he stayed by the grave, and only went home when the real morning broke.

Sósryqo kept watch the second night. Uástyrdji came again at midnight and again day dawned, but neither did Sósryqo allow himself to be deceived; he also only went home when day had really come.

The third night it was Chämýts' turn. When it became light at midnight, Chämýts thought it was really day and made up his mind to go home. "Why should I sit here any longer?" he asked himself, "it is daylight. I will rather go to the wedding of Alagá." And that he did. But Uástyrdji went to Satána, lay down for a little beside her, sent her his horse and his hound. After that he flew back to heaven.

But now someone came to Alagá and told him that the weeping of a maiden was heard from the sepulchre of Bóra, the neighing of a horse, and the baying of a hound. When Urýsmäg heard that he said, "Alas! alas! that is my brother's fault. He has not watched properly beside the grave of our mother." And when he came to the sepulchre he saw that his mother had borne a maiden, a foal, and a young hound. He took them home with him and brought them up. The child

¹ Sósryqo was not really her son, but as he lived with the two others she called him also to her.

became very beautiful and she was called Satána. The foal became the dappled horse Durdura, and the whelp a fine greyhound.

55. URÝSMÄG, CHÄMÝTS AND SÓSRÝQO

THEY of the race of Bóra—Urýsmäg, Chämýts and Sósryqo—once made up their minds to go out on a plundering expedition. When they came to the bridge of the Narts, they met Syfytär.¹ They caught him and challenged him to prophesy something good for them. "Let me go," he said, "and I will bless you from the other side of the river."

When they had acceded to his request, he said: "Listen! Your journey will be so fortunate and it will snow so heavily that it will be impossible to see to the top of the snow. You will have to wait for a whole week underneath a tree, and you will be obliged to eat the soles of your boots!"

"Ah," said the three, "if we go on there is misfortune ahead of us—if we turn back we are disgraced." And so they went on, and it really did snow hard as Syfytär had foretold. They were snowed up from one Saturday to the next, and had nothing whatever to eat. Then a squirrel appeared, they caught it and ate it, then quarrelled about its skin. "Give it to me," said Chämýts. and, "No; give it to me," said Urýsmäg. But Sósryqo said: "We will never agree about it. It will be better to arrange it this way; whichever of us tells the most wonderful story, he shall get the squirrel skin. Now, Chämýts, you begin."

"I was once crossing over a mountain," Chämýts

¹ Nothing is known about this personage.

said, "when I saw the seven Uástyrdji sitting there holding a meeting. I shot at them; three remained and four flew away to God and complained of me; they are still doing so. Another time I was crossing another mountain, and the seven Uátsillas were holding a meeting there. I shot again: four remained where they were, the other three went to God and complained of me. So altogether I killed seven Uátsillas and Uástyrdjis, and seven are complaining of me to God."

"But, Chämýts," expostulated the other two, "that was no misfortune for you! Sósryqo, it is your turn."

"I had a sweetheart in the town of Tynty," began Sósryqo. "One day I wanted to visit her, so I got my horse out of his stable, slung my sabre and other arms over my shoulder and rode off. When I was still a week's journey from my sweetheart a shepherd called out to me on the plain of Chós: 'Hullo, you! Are you not Sósryqo the Nart?' 'Certainly I am,' I replied. 'Whither away?' he called. 'Your sweetheart has been dead for a week already.' I began to weep, but told the shepherd I would ride on all the same and take her out of her grave. Then I found a piece of rope on the way that became first longer and then shorter. A little further on I saw a pigskin boot and a morocco-leather boot fighting, and the pigskin boot gaining the mastery over the other. Then I came to the grave of my beloved, opened it up and crept into it myself. The grave was filled in again and I spent a week in it. . . . Then I crawled out again, but while I was there I heard young dogs baying in the grave of her parents. So I went to my brother-in-law and asked him what that meant. He said that was because these people had refused bread to the poor and had no sympathy with them, that they had also been inhospitable to travellers. Then I

asked him what the rope meant that I had found on the way, and which I had tossed to one side with my riding-whip. That meant, he said, that two brothers, or a father and son, were dividing their land. Then I asked him what the struggle between the two boots meant. That meant, he said, that the Usdän (nobility) and the common people would become equal, and the people stronger than the nobility."

"Well, there is nothing extraordinary about all that," said the others, when Sósryqo came to an end. "It is strange, certainly, that you were in a grave, but as to what you saw, there is nothing wonderful in that. We don't want to hear any more of your stories. Urýsmäg, now it is your turn."

And Urýsmäg began: "I visited Uástyrdji's wife, who entertained me handsomely. I said to her my heart yearned for her. She was angry at that, fetched a hide whip out of her room, struck me with it, and I changed myself into a fierce dog. I ran round and round looking for food. The other dogs all ran after me, and soon I had some puppies. One day a merchant found me, and took me with him to guard his sheep. He chained me and hung a whole sheep round my neck, salted. I ate and ate till I was satisfied. Then seven wolves came to the door and said I must let them in, they would repay me for doing so; they even knew that my name was Urýsmäg. But I fell on them and killed them all. When the merchant got up next morning he saw them lying dead in front of the door. He took me up in his arms, kissed me and told everyone what I had done. When another merchant, a Kabardian, heard of it, he determined to have me at all costs. He got me, too, and tied a piece of bran bread round my neck. I was terribly hungry. Again the seven wolves

came: 'Let us in, Urýsmäg, you are dying of hunger yourself, and there will be something left over for you.' I let them in and they began to kill the sheep. I helped them to do it myself. We killed them all. When my master came into the stable in the morning I was afraid. He threw himself on me and beat me with all his strength. I ran away and went back to my first master. When he saw me lying in front of his door he said: 'I know that you are Urýsmäg. I know a way to change you back into a man again, and will teach you how to do it. Go back to Uástyrdji's wife; she will make you some soup, for she will not know who you are. Let your tail hang into the soup, then she will get angry and hit you with a whip, and you will at once get back your human form.' I did as he told me, but put my paw into the soup instead of my tail. She was angry and struck me with the same whip as before. When she saw me before her as a man, she said: 'Urýsmäg, I have been sorry that I did you that injury.' I answered her, 'You made me miserable, but may God punish you. It was because of you that the dogs ran after me, and that I gave birth to whelps. How can I get what I desire now?' 'Uástyrdji is not here,' she answered; 'if he does not come to-night, then I am at your disposal.' That night I slept with her; her husband did not come. In the morning I purposely left my boots in her room. Uástyrdji came home, tied his horse to a post in the courtyard, and carried his armour into his room. There he saw my boots lying. 'May God forgive you,' he said to his wife, 'but how do Urýsmäg's boots come to be here?' 'You can kill me if you like,' she said, 'but I will not hide from you that we slept together last night.'"

When Urýsmäg had finished he asked, "Now, to which of us does the squirrel skin belong?" Then they said to

Chämýts, "What misfortune did you have?" and to Sósryqo, "Who told you to creep into the grave of your sweetheart?" And they gave the skin to Urýsmäg because the dogs had run after him.

56. ETSEMEJ, THE SON OF ETSEJ

ONE day the boys were throwing their dice beside the mill, when suddenly a voice was heard, "Hullo! You there! What kind of a game is that? Do you think you can do any good with these little stones for dice?" The boys looked round in alarm. A boy about ten years old stood before them. It was Etsemej, the son of their prince who had been killed somewhere abroad. They did not allow their game to be interrupted, but went on playing. All at once Etsemej seized a millstone which was lying near, rolled it right on to the top of the dice and crushed it to dust. The boys threw a look of horror at Etsemej and ran into the mill with tears in their eyes. "Mother, mother," they cried. "Etsemej gives us no peace and has crushed our dice with a millstone." "I will soon settle him," said the mother, went out and began, "You great boor, why can you not let my children alone? Do you want to show off your strength? If you are really as strong as all that, then go and kill Kuba, who killed your father." When Etsemej heard these words, he got very red, hung his head and went into his house lost in thought. "How often," he said to himself, "how often I have asked my mother how my father lost his life. Now I have found out. But from whom? From a common woman who has reproached me with not yet having avenged my father." And he went home weeping and threw himself into the

arms of his mother. "What is wrong with you?" she asked him as she stroked his cheek. "I would like something to eat, roast me some maize," Etsemej answered. His mother fetched a maize cob, roasted it, put it on a plate and brought it to her son. "You always say you love me," said Etsemej; "if you really do, then why do you not give me the maize with your hand?" His mother smilingly strewed the grains of maize on her palm and held them out to her son. But Etsemej seized her wrist and held it so tightly that his mother cried out with pain. "Ah, you bad son," she said, "can you not annoy someone else? Must you plague your poor mother?" But Etsemej did not let go. "I will not let you go," he said, "till you tell me who murdered my father, and where his armour and his horse are to be found."

"My dear child," said his mother, who had guessed what was the matter, "you are really too young, but if you must know, it was Kuba who slew your father, and in order to avenge him your aunt set out with her army. When she said farewell she bade me send you to her assistance as soon as you were big enough and strong enough to play your part. But you are still weak; you are not able to help her yet."

"Mother, do not insult me," cried Etsemej; "I feel myself strong enough to avenge my father. It grieves me and I am ashamed to have to hear reproaches on that account from any stupid woman! Tell me, where is my father's armour and where is his horse?"

"Behind the iron door in our tower," his mother answered unwillingly. In a moment Etsemej was at the door of the tower and flung it open. Before him in the darkness and the damp stood his father's charger

with its flashing eyes. Since that day on which it had lost its master it had allowed no one to come near it, and would take neither food nor drink from anyone. But from hunger and thirst it had already eaten through seven layers of the earth's crust. When it saw the boy at the door it flung itself upon him, but Etsemej took it quietly by the mane, led it out, watered it, fed it and washed it. The following morning he came to his mother almost before daybreak to say farewell. "Dear mother," he said, "duty calls me, I must avenge my father. I will leave you now. Do not think of me too much, but pray God to give me strength and courage for my task." The mother shed bitter tears, embraced her son and sobbed: "Dear son, you are taking this heavy task too soon upon you. What will happen to me if you are killed?" She sobbed out much more, but Etsemej tore himself free, sprang on his horse and gave him a blow with his whip. The animal reared high in the air and then flew away like an arrow. Etsemej tried in vain to quieten it; it stamped, bit, tore, sprang, and raced like the wind. Then the young rider's blood got up; he tore at the reins and pressed the animal's ribs together with all his might. The red blood flowed down its sides and white foam covered its mouth. But soon the fiery creature became quieter, it obeyed its rider and galloped swiftly down the chosen path.

No one knows how long Etsemej rode on, but at last one evening he came to a dark wood. He dismounted in a clearing, let his horse graze and set about preparing supper and arranging his quarters for the night. He turned to the right and killed some stags and steinbocks; he turned to the left, and sheep and goats were his prey. Out of the skins of these animals he made himself a tent, and then he put a whole stag on the

roasting spit. Just as he was tasting the first mouthful of it two unknown warriors appeared. Etsemej stood up and invited them both to sit down beside him. They accepted his invitation shyly, and looked at him with wondering eyes. "What extraordinary being is this?" they thought. "He is quite small, and yet with one hand he puts a whole stag on the spit!" Etsemej gave them food to eat and water to drink, and asked them: "Dear guests, what fate has brought you here? Do you perhaps belong to this country, or are you on your wanderings like myself?" "We have been sent by a princess of the house of Etsej, who desires to avenge her brother's death at the hands of Kuba. For these ten years now she has waited for her nephew, because she cannot herself cross over the swollen river. But to-day she smelt the odour of roasting meat from this wood, and it seemed to her that it had been prepared with the savoury smelling salt only possessed by Prince Etsej. We came here because we wanted to make sure of this." "Yes, my father's sister is not mistaken," Etsemej replied proudly; "I am her nephew and am on my way to help her." The two messengers made deep obeisance before him and invited him to leave the wood at once and come with them to the princess. Etsemej agreed willingly to this and ordered his horse to be brought. Soon all three had left the wood and saw in the distance the valley in the midst of which the tent of the princess was set up under the shade of a tree. As they drew near, one of the two warriors said to Etsemej: "I must go and announce your arrival to the princess," and rode forwards quickly. When she heard of the approach of this long-expected guest, she hastened joyfully to meet him. "It is true I have waited long for you," she said to Etsemej, "but I did not dare to hope you could come

so soon. For . . . what help can you be to me yet? . . .” “You will soon see what I can do for you!” Etsemej answered proudly; “in the meantime only this: to-morrow, early in the grey of the morning I will leave you. Wait for me here with your army. I only ask you one thing—do not interfere with me and trust to me absolutely.” “Well, if you wish to take everything upon you, we will not prevent you,” said his aunt; “not for nothing does the proverb say ‘A woman’s hair is long, but her understanding short.’ For in fact we make many mistakes and even in the simplest things. Besides that, this is a man’s business, not a woman’s. Do therefore what you will, I leave everything to you.”

With the first streaks of dawn Etsemej mounted his horse and left the camp. When he came to the steep banks of a broad river he tightened his rein, and was no sooner in the waves than he was on the other side. Then he let his reins loose again and his horse carried him, as if it knew the mind of its master, on the wings of the wind: fields, woods, mountains, valleys, springs and rivers all seemed to fly past them. The faithful animal galloped on and on without seeming to tire. Finally it came one day, towards evening, into Kuba’s kingdom. The bold rider was boiling with impatience to avenge his father’s death, and when he saw Kuba’s horses grazing near him, he flung himself at once on their grooms, who surrounded him with drawn swords. But it was the last time they were to draw their swords. Etsemej struck all their heads off, caught the horses and drove them back to the camp of his aunt. When he arrived again at the broad river he thought to himself that this was only a small amount of booty he was bringing, and that people might think he had flown before Kuba like a small boy. No, that would never

do: his aunt could easily take the horses home, and he would go and see what else there was to be done.

So he drove the horses through the river, and fired a shot to let his followers know that something was required of them. And at once his aunt's warriors surrounded the horses and congratulated him on his successful capture. "You have kept your word," said the princess as she embraced her nephew, "you have shown your powers. Now we can return home, without fighting certainly, but still covered with glory." "Not I," laughed Etsemej, "you came sooner than I did, and so you can return home sooner." "But what do you intend to do?" asked the princess. "I will fight it out with Kuba," he replied, "while you drive the herd of horses home before they are pursued." With a sad heart the princess obeyed her nephew. She took leave of him with these words: "You seek a dangerous renown, but I must not discourage you from your task of filial piety."

Etsemej accompanied his aunt through the wood, then he turned, recrossed the river and gave rein to his horse. One day at noon he rested on a little hill. He had unsaddled his horse. He took his saddle for a pillow, lay down and soon went to sleep. Suddenly in his dreams he heard the neighing of his horse. He sprang up and saw how the animal was standing with pricked ears looking anxiously into the distance as if petrified. "What can he be seeing?" wondered Etsemej, and looked himself eagerly in the same direction. And he saw that, far away against the horizon, a little speck was moving, and was growing larger and larger every moment. Gradually he was able to distinguish head and legs: it was a horseman. But what an extraordinary horse! he rode; it ran on six legs, and seemed to fly like a raven, the dust flew up in front of it like a pillar, steam poured

out of its nostrils, a star glowed on its forehead, fire gleamed out of its eyes, hares leapt along beside it and seagulls flew about among its feet! Soon this strange horse arrived at the hill where Etsemej was resting. "Ho! you boy," said the rider, "did you notice who drove away my horses?" "Yes, of course I did," answered Etsemej; "a man drove them away in that direction," pointing towards the north. The rider at once turned his horse in that direction and galloped away. "Fly on that way," thought Etsemej to himself, "you will soon find your horses there." But the rider was back already and stormed furiously at Etsemej. "You useless booby, how dare you lie to me?" "I beg your pardon," said Etsemej, "I was so terrified that I made a mistake. But now I remember, the man drove your horses in *that* direction, towards the west." The rider tore off to the west, but was back immediately, raging even more furiously at Etsemej, and even threatening him with his whip. "Forgive me," the latter answered, "you rage at me so violently. . . . But now I remember exactly — your horses were driven away eastwards. Ride after them, you will surely not come back empty-handed this time." "Take care," answered Kuba—for it was he—"if you deceive me again, I will tear off your head." So saying he rode off towards the east. Now Etsemej, well satisfied with what he had done, began to examine his weapons. It was not long before Kuba came back. Already from afar he screamed, "It is an end of you this time, you shameless booby! Do you know with whom you have played these tricks? Perhaps you are yourself even the thief of my herd. Answer me! Your life is in my hands." "Not yet," Etsemej answered, laughing. "I allow that it was I who drove away your horses. And in order to show you that I was not afraid

of you, I sent you three times in the wrong direction. But if you want to know who has insulted you in this way—I am the son of Etsej and I have come to avenge my father.”

“Ah, I understand,” said Kuba and threw a contemptuous glance at Etsemej. “Well, shall we shoot or shall we wrestle?” “Women wrestle with us,” said Etsemej contemptuously. Kuba rode a gun-shot back, dismounted and went up a little hill. Etsemej, after the custom of the country, quickly loaded his weapon and had the first shot. “Now it is my turn,” said Kuba, whom Etsemej had already wounded. “I will only put half a load in my gun, and with one shot I will make an end of you.” He shot and hit the young hero in his right side, but Etsemej did not make much of that; he aimed again and hit Kuba’s left shoulder. And so the fight went on. The guns roared like thunder, the shots flashed like the stars, and soon thick smoke enveloped the warriors. When evening drew on their powder was exhausted. “It is time to rest,” said Kuba, “I will ride home and fetch powder and provisions.” “Of course we shall need both of these,” said Etsemej, and lay down to rest. Kuba mounted painfully and rode home. About midnight he arrived, dismounted and went into his house, supporting himself with his gun. “Wife, wife,” he cried from the doorstep, “come quickly and ease my pain; take these heavy bullets from me.” She hurried down, spread out a blanket for him to lie on and rubbed his body with a towel. And the bullets fell out of him like hail. “With what army have you been fighting to-day?” his wife asked. “Only with a ten-year boy,” answered Kuba.

Day had hardly dawned before he was again on the field of battle, breakfasted with his opponent, divided,

according to the ancient custom, powder and shot with him, and then said, "Good. Now it is time to begin again." "Good," answered Etsemej calmly. Again the shooting began, and in the evening Kuba galloped home full of bullets again as the first time. Etsemej could hardly move, but he was determined to hold out to the end. He had a bad night. In the morning Kuba came again, brought powder and shot, and the fight began anew and lasted till evening. Kuba rode home, got his wife to rub out the bullets, and walked up and down his room sunk in deep thought. "I have often fought alone against a whole army," he said to himself, "but never yet have I fought against such an opponent as this. He is young, still a child. But when he grows up, who will ever dare to fight against him?" But when he arrived at the field of battle on the fourth morning he found Etsemej lying there lifeless. "My gun has not played me false," he said with malicious joy at the victory over his foe, "it has broken all his limbs." He took off the dead boy's armour, bound the body to the tail of his horse and rode slowly home, leading the horse of his adversary by the rein. Towards evening he arrived home, showed his wife what he had brought with him and said, "Look! That is he with whom I have fought for three whole days." "With that little boy?" asked his wife. "Are you not ashamed of yourself to use a gun against a child?" "Yes, he looks small, but in reality he is a hero," said Kuba; "in any case I will set a guard over him at night, otherwise I should not be able to sleep." "A guard? Has the boy really given you such a fright that you must set a guard over his dead body?" asked his wife. "That is my affair," Kuba replied angrily, called a division of his army and commanded it to keep watch over the body of Etsemej. Then he went to bed. But his

wife could not shut her eyes, she was so sorry about the boy. She made up her mind to rub him with her magic towel, and to advise him, should she succeed in bringing him back to life, to escape at once. She got up carefully in order not to waken her husband and went out. She said to the guard that her husband had not been quite well, and that it was really unnecessary for them to stand there round a dead body, and they could go quietly to their homes. The watchers bowed respectfully and left her. Then with fear and trembling she went to the body, and began to rub Etsemej with her towel. At the touch of this magic towel the bullets fell out of him like hailstones. It was not long before a shiver went through his body and he opened his eyes. But then Kuba's wife was ashamed at what she had done, and she ran in to her husband. Etsemej followed her stealthily. "My enemy is coming! My enemy is coming! My enemy!" snored Kuba in his sleep, but his wife calmed him by saying: "Your enemy is sleeping his everlasting sleep under the eyes of your guard." Kuba fell into a quiet sleep again, but Etsemej drew nearer and nearer. "Ha! there he is," burst again from Kuba's lips. "There is no one there, and even if he was there he could not do you any harm. You know well that the black knife, through which alone you can meet your death, lies in the innermost box of the twenty that stand in the corner." So his wife comforted him and Kuba fell again into a quiet sleep. But Etsemej had heard everything. He stole gently up to the bed, drew the key carefully out and fetched the black knife. As he came near Kuba, Kuba felt his enemy approaching, trembled all over and was about to say something, when the knife flashed through the air and Kuba's head fell on the floor. Then Etsemej pulled his body gently out

of the bed that his wife might not notice anything, and lay down himself in Kuba's place.

At cock-crow he awoke. "Wife, wife," he cried, trying to imitate Kuba's voice, "get up and make ready; we must go away at once; our whole land is surrounded by enemies!" Then he got up, put on his armour and put the black knife back in its place. Kuba's widow had not noticed anything; she packed up and thought her husband was inside the armour. In two hours Kuba's house was empty and forsaken for ever. Now when they came to the river, Kuba's widow saw the reflection of him she thought her husband in the water, and she was astonished that it looked so small. She said, "How tiny you look in the water, only about half as big as you really are!" "A small axe will fell a big tree," Etsemej answered ironically. She turned round and saw that she was in the power of the youth whose life she had saved through the night. She blushed deeply and was surprised with herself that she had noticed nothing of all that had happened. When they came to a dark wood, Etsemej dismounted and helped his prisoner carefully down from her horse. Then he commanded his slaves to set up the tents, took his gun and went off shooting. After a merry evening they went on their way next day. Towards midday Etsemej came into Sósryqo's territory, who himself came out to greet the youth, to congratulate him on his victory and, according to the custom of the country, to demand toll for passing through his kingdom. "Take the horses laden with gold and add my slaves to them," said Etsemej generously. "No, I want none of all that," Sósryqo answered proudly, "only give me Kuba's wife." "It is shameless of you to demand that," said Etsemej haughtily. "Am I to return home, then, with empty

hands? And do you suppose in the whole tribe of Etsej there is one who would give up his wife for the asking?" "Then I will let all my warriors loose at your throat," threatened Sósryqo. "Victory shall decide to whom Kuba's wife shall belong." "I agree to that," said Etsemej, dismounted from his horse, ordered his men to fall back, and began to fight single-handed against Sósryqo and his whole army. With every shot he accounted for a man, but finally he became so tired and weak in the unequal struggle that he saw his end approaching. "I am dying," he said to his adversary. "I pray you to grant my last request. If you are not afraid, form up your whole army in single file and you yourself stand back." Sósryqo haughtily granted this request, and Etsemej, with his last shot, shot through the left ears of all Sósryqo's warriors as they stood in single file. Then he turned to his wife and took one long last look at her. She would have hastened to his aid with her magic cloth, but Sósryqo's cunning mother persuaded him not to allow this. Sósryqo did as his mother advised; he ran after the wife of Etsemej, overtook her and struck off the head of Etsemej. But his victory was vain, for the bored-through ears of his whole army cost him much fame and glory, and made him the laughing-stock of the whole world.

But Etsemej had been a faithful son to his father. He had fulfilled his duty and avenged him.

IV.—RUSTUM SAGAS

57. AN UDIAN STORY

ONCE upon a time there was a shepherd who had a beautiful wife and a son called Rustum. Now when the shepherd died the king took the wife to his court, and little Rustum grew up there. From his earliest years he was very strong. When he played Tschiling¹ with his companions, and one of them did not at once bring him a stick, he would tear off a boy's arm and use it instead. And in a ball game, if anyone was slow about giving him the ball he would pull off the head of one of his comrades and use it instead. Because of all this many complaints of Rustum were brought to the king, who did not know what to do with the boy. An old woman advised him to send Rustum to a certain forest to fetch wood; there were three Divs in the forest, and they would probably make an end of him. So the king had Rustum brought to him, and ordered him to go to this forest and hew wood. "Good," said Rustum, "but I shall require seven mules, one axe and one hatchet, each weighing five hundred-weight." When everything was ready Rustum went to the forest. He had hardly entered it when the Divs seized him. He took his axe and his hatchet, killed his assailants, put their bodies on three of his mules and loaded the other four with wood. Then he went home and unloaded his mules in the courtyard of the

¹ A game played with little sticks.

king. He was not a little surprised when he saw what Rustum had done.

A little later the old witch came again to the king and told him that a white Div lived at a certain place: Rustum should be sent there and challenged to fight with the white Div. The king did as the witch advised. But when Rustum came to the white Div, the Div said they must fast for forty days before they fought. Rustum agreed to that. But during the fast he lost much of his strength and did not think he would be able for the combat with the Div. So he went back to his mother to say farewell to her. When she set a roasted fowl before him, he at first refused to eat it; but on the entreaties of his mother he tried to eat to please her, but found he could not swallow a morsel. After he had said farewell, he went back to the Div to fight him. They fought so furiously that they both sprang up as high as the heavens. Then Rustum seized his opponent and threw him down with such violence that he sank three feet down into the earth. But the Div got up and grappled to again. Rustum threw him another time and dashed him on the ground, where he split open like a poppy-head. There he left him lying dead and went home.

But after a time he noticed that no one in the king's house seemed to like him. So he said farewell to everybody and went away. On his way he met a man who had a nut-tree in one hand, which he held over the reapers to cast a shadow over them and keep them cool. "What miracle are you performing there?" asked Rustum. "Miracle?" he answered. "No! only Rustum can perform miracles." "That is no work for you," said Rustum, "come with me." "Very good," said the man, "I will come." So the two went on together till they met a man

who had bound millstones on his feet and was grinding corn with them. "What wonder are you doing there?" asked Rustum. "This is nothing wonderful," answered the man, "only Rustum can work wonders." "Go to! Leave that and come with us," said Rustum. The man with the millstones was willing and joined himself to the other two. Then a little further on the three met a man who sat in a river and was drinking all the water away. "Now that is really a miracle," said Rustum, praising him. But the man in the river would not agree to that. "No," he said, "that is nothing compared to what Rustum can do." "Stop your water-drinking," said Rustum, "and come along with us."

So the four went on together till they came to a wood where they built themselves a hut. One of the number always stayed at home and cooked, while the others went out hunting. The first day the man with the nut-tree stayed at home. As he was busy cooking pilaw, an Adschdaha (a fabulous creature) came to him and asked for some of the soup from the pilaw. "Wait till my friends come," the nut-tree man replied. But the Adschdaha was angry, pulled a hair out of his moustache, bound the nut-tree man with it, and then ate up all the pilaw and went away. With great pains the nut-tree man managed to free himself, then he began again to cook the dinner. When the others came home and found nothing to eat, they asked why the dinner was not ready. The nut-tree man excused himself by saying that he had not known how late it was, but Rustum saw at once that there was something else behind that excuse. The following day the man with the millstones stayed at home, and the same thing happened with the Adschdaha as had happened to his predecessor. The third day it was the turn of the water-drinker, who also was

overtaken by the same fate. But on the fourth day Rustum himself stayed at home. When he was finished with the cooking, the Adschdaha appeared and asked again for some soup. Rustum ordered him away, the Adschdaha pulled a hair out of his moustache and was about to bind Rustum, when the latter tore his head off and threw it away. The head rolled along till it came to a hole into which it fell. When the others had come home and had eaten, Rustum told them what had happened with the Adschdaha, and then they all told their own experiences with him. "We will go and look what is in the hole," said Rustum; but when they got there they saw only that the hole was very deep, they could see nothing in it. They fetched a rope and let down the nut-tree man, but hardly had he entered the hole when he cried out that he was burning, they must pull him up again. The man with the millstones, whom they let down next, did not fare any better, neither did the water-drinker. Now it was Rustum's turn. "Just let me scream as hard as I like," he added, "do not pull me up, let me right down to the foot." And so it was. Rustum screamed with all his might, but was not pulled up again. When he came at last to the bottom of the hole he saw an iron door. He broke it open and found another behind it; when he broke that open there was another behind it, and so on till he had broken open seven iron doors. Then he saw a young maiden on whose knee a Div was sleeping. "Ah, what do you want here?" the maiden said to Rustum; "if the Div wakens he will eat you up." And in fact whenever the Div did waken he declared he smelt human flesh and it was long since he had had any to eat. But Rustum tore his head off and set the maiden free. She told him that she had a sister who was also in the power of a Div, and begged

Rustum to set her free too. Rustum did not need to be asked twice; he broke open the doors which led into the next apartment, struck the Div dead and brought out the maiden. And a third maiden he set free in the same way. Finally, behind a fourth very strong door he found a most beautiful maiden on whose knee a black Div was sleeping. But there also was the head of the Adsch-daha he had killed, who had come here to make a complaint against Rustum. He crushed the head under his foot, killed the Div and took the beautiful maiden for himself, but the other three he wished to give to his companions. Then he led the maidens to the rope. The first three maidens were pulled up; then he said to his own beautiful maiden, she must be pulled up before him, because he was afraid if he went up first she would perhaps stay down below. But the maiden would not agree to that because she was afraid that Rustum's friends would leave him in the lurch when they saw how beautiful she was. "No," said Rustum, "I will not allow myself to be pulled up before you are at the top." Then the maiden took two feathers out of her pocket, gave them to Rustum and said, "I will go up now. Perhaps your companions will not pull you up. If so, clap the feathers together, and at once a white sheep and a black goat will come to you. If you seat yourself on the sheep it will take you up to heaven, but if you seat yourself on the goat it will take you down to the underworld." Now as soon as the maiden arrived above and Rustum's companions saw her, they did not let down the rope again, for they wanted to keep the beautiful maiden to themselves. Rustum realised at once what was wrong, became terribly angry, and fell on the ground with rage and fury. Three days he lay there like that. But suddenly he remembered the

feathers. He struck them together and at once the sheep and the goat stood before him. Rustum wanted to seat himself on the sheep, but the goat shoved itself between them, and however much Rustum tried he could not manage to seat himself on the sheep. So at last he sat on the goat which took him down to the underworld.

On the way he met an old woman whom he asked for water; she gave him dirty water. He poured it out and asked for clean water. "We have none," said the old woman; "a serpent sits in our well and lets no one come near it. Every day someone must take it a present in order to get water. To-day it is the turn of the king's daughter." "Show me that well," said Rustum. The old woman led him to it. Rustum sat down and waited. After a time the king's daughter came and brought with her a dish of pilaw. Rustum asked her for it, but she refused it to him because she had to give it to the serpent who would come out at once to eat it, and would then give her water. "If I give you the pilaw, where shall we get water?" she added. "Leave that to me, just give me the dish," said Rustum, who ate up the pilaw and lay in wait for the serpent. When it crawled out he killed it and cut it to pieces, and the water became red with its blood. The king's daughter put her hands in it and laid them then on Rustum's back. When the king heard that the serpent was dead, he wanted to know the name of him who had killed it. He called together all the people of his kingdom; his daughter looked at them all but could not find Rustum. At last she told her father that Rustum would be found in the house of a certain old woman. The king sent there and had him brought. Then the princess recognised him. "How do you know that this is he?" asked her father. Then she showed him the two bloody handmarks on

Rustum's back. But the king said to Rustum, "Giant, tell me your wish: I will give you whatever you desire." "I want nothing from you," Rustum answered, "only send me up again to the overworld." "I cannot do that," said the king, "but I know a place where there is a bird whose young are always devoured by a serpent. If you can kill that serpent the bird will perhaps carry you where you wish to go." Rustum at once sought out the bird, killed the serpent, and went to sleep there. When the bird came flying back to her nest, she thought that the man who was sleeping there was surely he who always killed her young. She was just about to kill him when the young birds in the nest said: "No, it was not he, but the serpent which he has cut to pieces." Then the bird flew down over Rustum and sheltered him with her wings. When he awakened and saw the bird hovering above him he was afraid, but the bird assured him at once and said, "Do not be afraid, I am entirely at your service, only command me and I will obey." "Good! Then take me to the overworld," said Rustum. "You ask a very great service of me," answered the bird. "If I were young it would be different, but I am already old. Still, you have rendered me such great service that I must certainly fulfil your request. But go first to the king and ask him for seven hundredweight of meat and seven hundredweight of water." When Rustum had brought that, the bird took him on her back and said to him, "Every time I cry, throw a hundredweight of meat and a hundredweight of water into my beak." Then the bird flew away with Rustum on her back. When they had nearly reached their goal, Rustum missed the bird's beak with the last piece of meat, but he at once cut a piece off his own thigh and gave it to the bird. It noticed by the sweet

taste that it was human flesh and did not swallow it, but kept it under its tongue. When they had arrived in the overworld Rustum got off the bird's back and sat down. "Get up and walk," said the bird; "why do you sit down?" "Because I am tired," Rustum answered. "I did the flying, yet you are tired," said the bird. But Rustum, who did not want to insult his rescuer, stood up and walked on. Then the bird noticed that Rustum was limping, and asked him the reason for that. "There was no more meat," he answered, "and so I cut you a piece off my own thigh." The bird let it fall out of her beak, laid it on the wound, stroked it once or twice with one of her feathers and Rustum's thigh was whole. Then she said: "Take these two feathers, and if you are ever in trouble clap them together and I will come to you at once." Then Rustum went forward into that wood where he and his companions had built their hut. A great quarrel had arisen as to which of the three companions should have the beautiful maiden. But when they saw Rustum coming they were astonished and ashamed, fell down on their knees before him and prayed him for forgiveness. He granted it, took the maiden and gave one of the other three maidens to each of his companions. Then they made up their minds that each of them should go to a different country, but in order to keep in touch with each other they exchanged rings. And if any of them should get into trouble, the stone of his ring would become black and so the friends would know how it fared with each other. Then they said farewell, and each went his way.

Rustum and his beautiful bride came to a certain kingdom. When he saw a king's castle there, he asked to whom it belonged. He was told it belonged to a Div.

He killed the Div and took his wife, so that he had now two wives. But the king of that country had long had an eye on the wife of the Div, though he had not dared to go near her. When he heard that she was now with Rustum, he tried to take her away from him. An old witch offered to help him in this. "I will bring her to you," she said to the king, "if you will have a box made which can be shut whenever anyone sits down on it, and which will then fly straight to your castle when it is wished to do so." "Good," said the king, "I will have the box made and will pay you your weight in gold when you bring the woman here." The witch went and sat in front of Rustum's door. When he came home from the hunt at night she spoke to him: "I am dying of hunger. Take me in as a servant." "I want nothing from you," said Rustum, "but you may live in peace in my house." But his second wife did not like the old woman; she declared this old woman boded no good. But the witch stayed on nevertheless, and even contrived to make friends with Rustum's second wife. One day she asked the wife if she knew wherein Rustum's great strength consisted. "No, I do not know that," the wife answered. "What kind of a wife are you, if you do not even know the reason of your husband's strength?" asked the old woman. That worked. Soon afterwards the wife asked her husband how he was so strong. Rustum answered evasively at first, but after repeated questioning he allowed that his strength came from the ring on his finger; if that was taken off, then he would be like a rag, not even able to stand on his own feet, and if he remained forty days in that condition, then he would die. The old woman heard all that. And one day when Rustum had fallen asleep in the garden, she stole up to him, smeared his ring-finger with oil,

drew his ring gently off and threw it down the well. Then she went to Rustum's second wife, and asked her to come out to the garden because the day was fine. And when she was in the garden the old woman led her to the box and asked her to sit down on it and admire the beauty of the garden. Hardly had Rustum's wife sat down when the old woman turned the key, and in a moment the wife and the box were in the king's courtyard.

But at that moment the stones of the rings of Rustum's friends became black, and they knew that Rustum was in danger. They set out at once and found him lying unconscious in the garden, and his ring was not on his finger. They searched and searched, but could not find it. Then the water-drinker drank up all the water from the well, found the ring and put it again on Rustum's finger. Rustum came to himself, was overjoyed to see his companions, and said, "How long have I been asleep?" "You have not been asleep," they answered, "you were unconscious." And then they told him all that had happened. Full of amazement Rustum went into the house, saw that his second wife had disappeared, and with her the old woman. He asked his first wife, the beautiful maiden, about them, but she knew nothing. Then he suddenly realised what must have happened. He set out with his companions, overthrew and destroyed the king's whole army, put the king himself to death and took his wife again. Then they held a great banquet, and from that time they all lived happily together.

Three apples fell down from God; one for me, one for the teller of the story, and one for the listener.

58. A TATAR VARIANT

RUSTUMSAL was the son of Qahirman. One day Rustumsal was teasing an old woman. "Why can you not leave me alone?" she asked. "Why must you make fun of me? It would be better for you if you spent your time bringing back your aunt from the white Div. If you do not know the story already, one of the Divs—he with the forty heads—stole her away and keeps her a prisoner as his wife." Rustumsal was heartily ashamed, spoke never a word, but left the house.

When he got home he asked his parents: "Have I an aunt?" "No, you have no aunt," they both answered. "But I have been told I have one," answered Rustumsal. "I must go and fetch her." Both father and mother vowed that what he had been told was not true. But all in vain. Rustumsal kept to his decision. "I know you do not believe us," said his father, "but I will send for my wise men, you can ask them." "Good," said Rustumsal, "let them come."

They arrived towards evening, sat down and passed some time in conversation. They were given sherbet to drink and then Rustumsal came and said, "Wise men! I have a question for you." "Ask it," said the oldest of the wise men, "we will answer it to the best of our powers." "This is my question," said Rustumsal: "have I an aunt and has she been carried off by the white Divs?" "No, you never had an aunt," answered the wise men.

Rustumsal did not say a word. He went home and lay down to sleep. But early next morning, without saying farewell to anyone, he left the town. One week, two weeks he wandered about, living on the game he caught in hunting. But one day he came to a town. He

looked about for an inn, and ordered a dish of pilaw. When he had eaten it, he ordered a second. Then when he had paid for it he asked the landlord where the king of the town lived. The landlord pointed out the house, and Rustumsal went straight up to it. But the king's guards would not let him in. He struck one of them down on the threshold, the others fled away. Then he broke open the gates and went in. The king was informed that an extraordinarily strong man had appeared, that he had killed one of the guards, broken open the gates, and now demanded to be taken to the king. He gave orders that the intruder should be brought to him. When Rustumsal came into the room in which the king was, the latter stood up and invited Rustumsal to come nearer. Rustumsal greeted him and then sat down opposite the king. "King," said he, "I wish you well. Do you know me?" The king was taken aback at the boldness of these words and answered, "I know you." "I am Rustumsal, the son of Qahirman. I have come to you with a question: Which of the Divs carried off my aunt? If you do not tell me the truth, then it is all over with your kingdom and with yourself." The king was still more alarmed and said, "I do not know. But I will ask my wise men, and will tell you what they say." "Good," said Rustumsal.

Now while Rustumsal was being given food and drink and hospitably entertained, the king secretly left his house, went to his vizier, and commanded him to let Rustumsal's father know that his son had arrived and had asked where his aunt was. The vizier set out at once, and after two days' journey arrived at Rustumsal's home and delivered his message to Qahirman. He left home at once with his wife, and after two days' travel arrived at the house of the king. But Rustumsal

heard his father's voice in the next room, stood up, strode into the room and said, "Here I am." "What can I do to prevent my son going to the white Div?" Qahirman asked the king. "There are in my armoury weapons belonging to seven of your ancestors," said the king, "with which they themselves fought against the Divs. If your son takes these weapons with him, you may be certain that he will bring his aunt safely back." Then Qahirman and the king made up their minds to tell Rustumsal the truth, and said to him: "Your aunt is with the forty-headed Div, who is king of all the Divs. But we do not ourselves know where he lives." And the king added, "Come to my treasure-house, I will give you money."

So all three went to the treasure-house. There they found one room full of gold, and in another a sword, a lance and a bow hung on the wall. Rustumsal took down the weapons, struck the sword into the floor, threw the lance into the air and caught it again. Then he girt on the sword, and took the lance and bow in his hand. Thus armed, he left the treasure-house. The king was amazed at Rustumsal's strength and said, "God willing, Qahirman, Rustumsal will bring his aunt back."

Then they went back again to the king's house where they had a meal together, and when they had finished Rustumsal stood up and said, "Farewell! I will go now." His parents wept bitterly, and begged him still to give up his dangerous enterprise. But Rustumsal was deaf to their entreaties. "I must absolutely rescue my aunt, let it cost what it may. If I do not return within seven years you may know that I am dead." With these words he swung himself up on his charger and rode off. But Qahirman and his wife returned home in safety.

Rustumsal soon crossed over from that kingdom to another. In the evening he let his charger loose to graze, killed some game, ate a hearty meal and then lay down to sleep. Next morning he saddled his horse again and rode on. But his horse had six feet, and that was why he was called Tulpar. And he could cover a ten days' journey in one or two days.

Now as Rustumsal rode on, all at once he saw something black in the distance. "Those must be the Divs," he said, and held on towards them. But when he came nearer he saw that it was an old man who was reading the Koran. He greeted him and the old man answered, "Welcome," and kissed his hand. Rustumsal said, "Good luck to you," and kissed his hand. After they had talked together for some time, the old man said to Rustumsal, "I have been reading the Koran these last forty years and I know that one of these days Rustumsal will come to fight with the forty-headed Div. But I could not make out from the Koran when he would come. I am anxious to see this combat, and I am very glad to have met you. You have much to go through, but you will emerge victorious from your trials. And now I will look in the Koran and see what exactly lies before you. At first you will suffer hunger in a forest. Then a cow will come towards you, and you will be tempted to drink her milk. Do not do it, however, for if you do you will be bewitched. Then you will see a man who carries a pitcher full of presents on his head. If you take anything from it you will fall a victim to a powerful spell. Later on you will meet a beautiful maiden and she will invite you into her garden, where there will be all kinds of fruit. Do not follow her or you will be heavily bewitched. Be careful to avoid all these spells; but if it should happen that you fall under one of them, you will

find Iskender's ¹ drum hanging on a tree. If you sound it, the whole world will hear; I too will hear, and will come at once to your aid. But once again—it will be hard for you to overcome all these hindrances, and I will do all I can to help you."

"I will attempt it, in spite of everything," said Rustumsal. "Then remember well all that I have told you," said the old man. Rustumsal then mounted Tulpar and rode into the land of the white Divs.

First of all came hunger. One day Rustumsal could not catch sight of any game whatever. In the evening he lay down hungry, and as he went into the forest the following morning, he saw a cow. But at once he remembered the words of the old man, struck Tulpar a sharp blow and fled from the forest. Then he came to a great smooth plain where he rested for a little. While he lay there he saw some men coming towards him, one of whom carried a pitcher full of presents on his head. But Rustumsal took nothing, thanked the man, mounted his horse and rode away. That evening also he lay down hungry again. In the morning he rose, prayed to God, mounted Tulpar and rode on. Very soon he came to a wood and saw a large animal, which he killed and roasted. As he had eaten nothing since he left the old man he enjoyed his meal, rested a little and then rode on again. Towards evening he reached a garden. He looked in and saw a beautiful maiden wandering leisurely in it. When she saw Rustumsal, she invited him to come in. And although Rustumsal at once remembered the warning of the old man, he cast it to the four winds. "Perhaps it was not true what he told me," he said to himself; "I will try it anyway." And he trod into the garden. He walked up and down for some time with

¹ Alexander the Great.

the maiden, when all of a sudden he noticed that both maiden and garden had disappeared. He stood there full of bitter regrets, and when he looked up he became aware that he was standing in front of a castle and it was surrounded on all sides by a wall. But there was no door in the wall. He was shut in. Now he knew that he had fallen under a heavy spell. He walked on a little and came to a gateway in the hillside. He broke it open and went in. Now he found himself in a large room in which there were seven men bound with chains. He asked them who they were, and received the answer that they were all kings who while riding out to war had met a maiden who had asked them into her garden to refresh themselves. After they had accepted her invitation suddenly the garden and the maiden had disappeared, and after they had wandered about the neighbourhood for two or three weeks the servants of the maiden had come, put them in chains and locked them into this room. Now they were dying of hunger. Rustumsal tore off their chains and set the kings free. But from weakness—so long had they hungered—they could not walk. Rustumsal went away to look for something to eat, but he found nothing save two dead bodies, whose flesh he brought to the starving kings. The kings were glad that he had brought them something to eat and had broken their spell. Rustumsal then rode on and came again to a wood. There he found Iskender's drum hanging on a tree as the old man had told him. With a firm hand Rustumsal beat the drum, and then hung it up again in the same place. Two days later he heard someone calling, and he cried as loud as he could, "Here I am," and at the same moment it occurred to him that he who was calling could be none other than the old man. He ran quickly to the kings to encourage

them, and behold, there was the old man already. He took out his Koran, read in it, and the power of the holy word at once opened a door in the round wall of the castle. The old man came in, greeted Rustumsal and said, "Hasten, I do not want the maiden to see me near you." "No," said Rustumsal, "but you must first free the kings from their spell, then I shall be ready to follow you," and turning to the kings he said, "You must now go to the old man one after the other." The old man told them all to go out, and Rustumsal himself came last. When they had left the bewitched castle behind and come to a wood, they related to each their experiences, their troubles and distresses, and then lay down to sleep.

Next morning Rustumsal mounted Tulpar again, said farewell to his friends, and set out on his way. The seven kings too set out on their travels, each one to his own country. After one or two weeks' journey Rustumsal set up his tent near a fortress, intending to stay there. But as the place pleased him so much he stayed even longer than he had intended; he spent the days in shooting, while Tulpar grazed happily the whole day long.

One evening Rustumsal's mother said to her husband, "You, why do you not try to hear something about your son? Who knows how things are with him now! Perhaps the Divs have killed him—perhaps he still lives! You must really go and see what has happened to him." Qahirman asked his bird Smaragd, whom he called his mother, "Smaragd, where is my son Rustumsal?" "It is difficult to get to him," answered the bird, "because he is living in a high fortress. He has more than enough to eat and he is well and strong; whenever he sees game he kills it for food. If we try to go to him

it may be that he will mistake us from afar for Divs and shoot at us." "No, no," said Qahirman, "I can call to him from afar who I am. He will recognise my voice." "I will do my best and we will try to see how he prospers," said the bird; "but you must give me a skin of water with me, for the way is long." Then Qahirman sat down on the back of the bird, she spread her pinions and flew away. She flew for two weeks till she had brought Qahirman near the fortress where Rustumsal lived. "Now call your son," said the bird, "or else he will surely shoot at us." "Good," said Qahirman, and as the bird flew over the fortress Rustumsal took his bow and was about to shoot at it. But from above his father called out to him, "Do not shoot, my son, it is I." When Rustumsal heard his father's voice, he let his bow fall and called "Come!" The bird Smaragd let itself glide down; Qahirman stepped off its back and stood before his son, but the bird flew back at once. After father and son had spoken for some time together, Rustumsal went off shooting, shot a stag, lighted a fire and roasted it. And as the father liked that place as much as the son, they stayed there two months.

But the seven kings, who had returned to their own kingdoms in the meantime, had there recovered from their sufferings. They often thought of Rustumsal, and always spoke of him when they met together. "Rustumsal delivered us from the spell," they used to say, "we must go and see what has happened to him." So they armed a great army and set out to seek Rustumsal. At a certain place they joined all their armies together into one large army, which then went on seeking for Rustumsal, but could not find him. Then one day the kings caused it to be announced that whosoever should find Rustumsal should have a great reward;

he should be put in a great weighing-machine and given as much gold as it took to balance him. Now one day a man who was engaged in the search for Rustumsal, but smoked his water-pipe calmly all the same, arrived by chance at a fortress. "Where have I landed now?" he asked himself in astonishment, looked round him, and saw near by a tent with two enormous men sitting beside it.

When they noticed him they asked him who he was and what he wanted. "I have come to ask you something. I want to find Rustumsal who set out to find the white Divs." "I am he," answered Rustumsal, "go back and tell the kings to come to me." "Tell me the truth," the man beseeched, "for if I tell them a lie they will kill me." "Have no fear," said Rustumsal, "I am speaking the truth. I am really he whom you seek." So the man went back to his army and told the kings all that had happened to him. They were overjoyed and made the man lead them at once to him they had sought so long. "Why have you come?" asked Rustumsal. "In order to help you," they answered. Rustumsal too was overjoyed, and set out at once with two hundred men on a hunting expedition. As they met with great success he was able to supply the whole army with food. And so the whole company stayed for a month or two in that district.

As Rustumsal had now found out where the white Divs lived, he told the kings and asked them if they were ready to take part in a campaign against them. They agreed willingly.

Shortly after this the army of the white Divs came in sight, approaching against Rustumsal. Rustumsal threw himself against them, and with him the seven kings

with their great army. But Rustumsal begged them to keep back, as he wanted to begin the combat against the enemy alone with his father. After the battle the Divs gave their king to understand that their army had been beaten by two men. The king of the Divs was not a little astonished and said, "I would like to know what kind of a man this is who has been able to conquer my army. Every human creature that comes into my kingdom is bewitched, and yet this man has been able to penetrate as far as this! Call my vizier." When the vizier came the king said to him, "What are we to do with this dangerous stranger?" "We must send our best army, which consists entirely of giants, against him; they will kill him." So all the best and most frightful giants were collected together and sent against Rustumsal. When he saw them approaching he said to his father, "Let us rush at them." "No," replied Qahirman, "let them come gradually." And they came nearer and nearer; then one of them came forward and called out to the two, "Which of you will dare to fight with me?" "I will," answered Rustumsal. They rushed at each other and in a short time Rustumsal had thrown his opponent and struck off his head. When the other giants saw that, they threw themselves on Rustumsal. But at the same moment the seven kings and their great army came to his help. The battle ended in favour of Rustumsal and his companions. Following close on the heels of the enemy, who were now in full flight, they soon arrived at the town of the Divs. There Rustumsal found the house of the king of the Divs, broke into it and killed the women slaves. Then he called for his aunt, and behold, a woman came and said, "I am your aunt." Rustumsal took her with him, led her to his father and said, "Father, you told me I had no aunt."

But who, then, is this?" "I only said that," his father replied, "so that you should not go to the land of the Divs. But now, thanks be to God, you have accomplished your aim. And now it is time to go home." But Rustumsal turned to the seven kings and said, "Now we must collect camels to carry our booty and then we will go home." And that was done; everything was loaded on camels, and together they all set out for home. On the fourteenth day of the journey the seven kings said to Rustumsal, "We must part here, for we must go home to our own countries, as you must go to yours. Our ways part here." Rustumsal agreed to that, said farewell to them, and each went his own way. After travelling for two weeks more, Rustumsal came to the neighbourhood of his own native town, and met great numbers of people on the roads there, all dressed in black. He stopped one of them and asked why everyone was in black. The man, who did not know Rustumsal, answered, "The son of our king went away to the land of the white Divs to fetch his aunt, and to this day he has not returned. That is why we are all in mourning. And there is something else I must tell you—since Rustumsal and his father have utterly disappeared and left no trace, strange conquerors have come and want to take our land from us and destroy it." When Rustumsal heard that, he sent the man on in front with the tidings that Rustumsal and his father and his aunt had all returned. "Gladly will I go and spread these good tidings," said the man, "but I am afraid it cannot be true and that the people will strike off my head for deceiving them." "Have no fear," said Rustumsal, "only say what I have told you." The man went and took the news to the strange king who had conquered Qahirman's kingdom. "If that which you say is true," said the king,

"then I will reward you handsomely. But if it is false it will cost you your head."

In the meantime Qahirman's father had heard of the return of his son and his grandson, and set out to meet them. But the strange king hurried away as fast as he could with his men, and Rustumsal, his father and his grandfather made a joyful entry into their town. Now before Rustumsal had gone away to the land of the Divs, he had fought with two neighbouring kings, and from that campaign had brought home a wife, but had given her a letter of separation when he set out to rescue his aunt. This wife had presented him with three sons—Djambachysch, Djanabbas and Söhrab. They were brought up unknown to each other as well as to their father. One day the first of the three was playing dice with some other boys when his playmates said to him, "You should really not be playing with us, you have no father." Sad and sorrowful, with bent head, the boy went to his mother and said, "What has happened to my father? Is he alive or is he dead?" "I do not know," answered his mother. "What was my father called?" asked Djambachysch further. "He was called Rustumsal," was the answer. "Good, I will go and seek my father," said the boy. His mother gave him some provisions and he set out on his journey. After travelling for two weeks Djambachysch came into the neighbourhood of a town. There he met an old man working in the fields and asked him, "Could you give me shelter for the night?" When the old man answered that he could, Djambachysch helped him with his work, and when evening fell he took the old man home to his house. In these few hours Djambachysch had done as much work as another man would have done in three days. When they reached his house the old man said to

his wife, "Wife, prepare supper for us." And after they were satisfied and had talked together for a little, they all went to rest for the night.

The following day the old man told the king about Djambachysch and his extraordinary strength. The king commanded that the youth should be brought before him. Now it so happened that Rustumsal and his sons happened to be staying with the king at that very time. The king asked Djambachysch if he could wrestle. "Yes, that I can do," he answered. "Good, then wrestle first of all with him here," said the king, putting Djanabbas up against him. They rushed at each other and Djambachysch soon threw his opponent and bound his feet together with a rope. The next day he wrestled with Söhrab. He threw him too and laid him beside Djanabbas. Rustumsal was amazed at the strength of Djambachysch and said, "Now I will wrestle with him myself," but he had resolved to kill him if he was not able to conquer him in the ring. As it turned out, Rustumsal wounded his opponent during the fight. The two then separated, and Djambachysch went home and prepared a healing balm for his wounds. But next morning he was again on the field of battle. They closed with each other and fought, till when Rustumsal saw that his strength was giving way he drew his dagger and struck it into Djambachysch's chest up to the hilt. With eyes already glazed in death, Djambachysch turned his head and said to his opponent: "You inhuman creature! why have you killed me in that way? If my father only knew he would seek you out, even if you were in heaven itself." "Who is your father, then?" "My father is Rustumsal, son of Qahirman!" When Rustumsal heard that, he uttered a fearful cry and fell to the ground in a swoon. But Djambachysch died. When Rustumsal

came to himself, he prayed God that He might restore his son to life again. And a voice was heard from heaven, "Listen, Rustumsal! You must lay Djambachysch in a trough and carry him for forty days on your head. Then he will come to life again." Rustumsal fulfilled this command. On the thirty-eighth or thirty-ninth day he came to a river and saw there a man washing black wool, in order, as he said, to make it white. "That is no use," said Rustumsal, "black wool will never become white, however long you wash it." "Why not then?" asked the man. "If that will never come to pass, then neither will a dead man ever come alive again." Rustumsal thought to himself that the man was right after all, a dead man would really never come to life again, and so it was useless to carry Djambachysch' body about any longer. So he took the trough down off his head and laid it on the ground. But then he saw that Djambachysch was already nearly alive; at the very moment, however, when the trough touched the earth he died again. And when Rustumsal looked up towards the old man who had been washing the wool, he saw that he had disappeared. Then he understood that it had been a spell to hinder him in the carrying out of his task. Reproaching himself bitterly, he carried Djambachysch home and buried him.

After a time Rustumsal began to travel about his kingdom and busy himself with its government. So two years passed. Then it occurred to him one fine day that he was really no hero because he had never yet been in the land of the Djinnns. "Many giants have gone there, but none has ever come back," he said to himself; "I must absolutely go there and take a few of their towns." So he called his vizier and his chamberlain and told them of his intention: "I must go away now on my travels,

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see to it that you govern my country wisely." "Good," they answered; "do as you will, but leave us some of your giants, otherwise other kings might think of invading our country." Rustumsal granted this request and set out on his travels.

For some months he wandered through woods and over mountains, without finding anything. Then one day he saw something black on the slope of a mountain. It was a town. With the cry, "O Ali!"¹ he set off towards it, and as he drew nearer he saw that there were great fortresses at the four sides of this town, which was itself very beautiful. He joyfully made up his mind to take it, to rest there a year or two and then go on to the land of the Djinn. So he went on to the town and ordered his army to follow him. He forced his way in, and the inhabitants, terrified by this sudden attack, ran to their king and told him how a strange man with his army had seized the town and now wished to fight with its king. The king let Rustumsal know that his giants would be ready to oppose Rustumsal's army the next morning. Rustumsal did not waste his time till then; he first went hunting, and when he came back he had the drums beaten, marshalled his army and then awaited the king's giants. When they approached Rustumsal himself wanted to fight, but Djanabbas would not agree to this. "If he takes you, what will happen to the rest of us? Let me fight; if I fall, then you can always take my place." So Djanabbas prepared for battle. He rushed at his opponent, threw him and was about to strike off his head, when he saw that his opponent was a woman. "Stand up and go your way," he said, "I only fight

¹ Ali was the fourth Caliph, the nephew and son-in-law of the Prophet. He was murdered in Kufa in 661. He is the Saint of the Shi'is, a sect to be found principally in Persia.

with men." "But I am a maiden," she replied, "who has made up her mind that she will only marry a man who has conquered her." And as she acknowledged herself defeated, Djanabbas made no objection.

They spent two months after these events in feasting and merry-making, both by day and by night, and then Rustumsal wanted to go on further into the land of the Djinns. Djanabbas' wife advised him against it. "Do not go there," she said. "But if you must go, then take me with you." "No," answered Rustumsal, "I cannot go out to battle with my daughter-in-law, that would be a scandal! You must stay here." A few days later when he was about to start she came to him again and begged him to take her with him, "For," she said, "you do not know that country, nor do you know the Djinns. You will never accomplish your aim! Hitherto the Djinns have killed every hero who has dared to go into their land, and it will cost you your life too." "No," Rustumsal said, declining her offer, "we will go without you. But if we get into difficulties, you may come and help us." And so it was settled. Rustumsal gave a part of his army over to each of his sons and sent them by different ways into the land of the Djinns, where at a certain time they were to meet at the Djinn fortress.

Now when they had arrived at the fortress and surrounded it on all sides, they saw that there was only one entrance. But the wife of Djanabbas had asked every night how they were faring, and every night she had got a gloomy answer. That made her anxious, so she went to her father and begged his permission to hasten to the help of Rustumsal. In two days she arrived at the army and began to consult her Book of Spells. For Rustumsal, Djanabbas and Söhrab had fallen under

a bad spell when they forced their way into the fortress. They did everything in their power to shake themselves free of it, but in vain. And they had seen that a hundred men stood there all turned to stone. But when they now heard that Djanabbas' wife had come to help them, they took heart again. And she gave them the following advice: "When you lie down to sleep, you must lie on your faces, then you will see what happens." She herself, however, took out her Book of Spells again and read it. At first a sound was heard as if rain was falling, then a rain of fire fell down, and as she read on her spells brought forth a river out of the ground. She cast many other spells, but all in vain. But finally she succeeded in freeing Rustumsal and the others, and they continued their journey into the land of the Djinn.

The Djinn sorcerer did not know what he should do. But Djanabbas' wife said to her husband: "Do you see that speck in the heavens? We must kill that. When we have killed it, then the land of the Djinn will be in our hands. We must shoot at it with our cannons. But if the first shot does not reach it, then the feet of him who fired it will be turned to stone. If he misses again he will become stone up to his heart, and if he misses a third time he will become stone altogether. For you must know we can all turn ourselves into stone." Rustumsal offered to fire the first shot, but she would not agree to that, she said his eldest son should do it. So Djanabbas loaded the gun, fired and missed, and in a moment his feet had become stone. When Rustumsal saw that he would not hear of Djanabbas firing again. "What will happen to us if he is turned into stone?" he asked. "But that will not do," said Djanabbas' wife; "whoever fires the first shot must fire the second and the third also." So Djanabbas fired for the second time,

failed again, and became stone up to his heart. "That is enough," said his wife, "if you fail again, you will become entirely stone, and all of us as well." But Djanabbas would not hear of that. He loaded the gun again, aimed it carefully and gave the order "Fire!" The gun roared, the thing fell out of the heavens with a crack of thunder, and was dead.

Now they could take the town, plunder it and set out for home again. Djanabbas took his wife and returned to his own town. And towards the time when Qahirman expected his son to return, he went up a high mountain and looked for Rustumsal. When he came near his native town he met two men, whom he stopped and asked, "Well, what is the news? Is everything prosperous?" "When you went away," they replied, "strange giants came into our country and wanted to take our town. They will perhaps succeed to-day or to-morrow. Qahirman has fled and waits now for your return on a high mountain." "Go quickly to my father," ordered Rustumsal, "and tell him his son has conquered the land of the Djinns, and has now returned. Also that his son has married." The men hastened to Qahirman and delivered their message. Qahirman was overjoyed and came back with all haste. The strange giants, when they heard of Rustumsal's return, took themselves off as fast as they could. Rustumsal ruled a few years longer, and when he came to a great age he gave over his kingdom to the son of Djambachysch, because Rustumsal had killed his father. And Djambachysch's son ascended the throne in this twenty-fifth year. His name was Sulfager, and he too was very brave,

V.—PROMETHEUS SAGAS

59. GEORGIAN VARIANT

THERE were once three brothers, Rustum, Badri and Uszup. Rustum was a passionate youth, and was so strong that when he struck himself on the head with a lump of iron and shouted, all the giants of the land ran together and brought him presents of gold and silver. One day when hunting he saw a stag at which he took aim. Not far away stood a house, which was gilded inside but covered with earth outside. At the moment when Rustum was about to fire a beautiful maiden appeared, so beautiful that none like her had ever been seen, and called to him, "Do not kill my stag—it is my cow." So Rustum let the creature go and went up to the maiden, whom he married at once. Some time later he set out on a journey and as he said farewell to his wife, he told her, "You will bear a son. Call him Amiran."

And she bore a son. For a long time he was unchristened, but at last he begged his mother himself to have him christened. Then Jesus appeared, christened him and gave him the name Amiran. When he was twelve years old he went out hunting for the first time. But he wanted to see his father; he begged his mother to let him go and follow his father. She blessed him and let him go. He wandered about for a long time looking for his father, asking for him everywhere. And at last he came to the house in which Rustum had lived with his brothers. He learned from his uncles

that his father had fallen in battle with the giants, that the giants were now living in his house and were insulting his ashes. Amiran burst into the house and killed all the giants, then he buried his father's remains with all honour. When he had finished that, he persuaded his uncles to come with him to the country called Filich, to fight with the giants there. At first Badri and Uszup would not hear of it, but then they gave in on condition that they themselves would not be required to fight, but only to act as witnesses to the heroic deeds of their nephew.

They at once made ready for the journey. On the way they met a man who was carrying pears in his apron. The giants greeted him and asked where he came from. The man told them that not far from where they were stood a pear-tree in which three dragons lived; they had taken him prisoner and forced him to serve their young ones, that was why he had to take them pears every day. Amiran took the pears from him, set him free, and strode towards the tree in which the three dragons lived.

He killed two of them with his sword, the third he simply took by the ear and dragged violently here and there and up and down. Then the dragon opened its jaws and swallowed Amiran. But he cut open the belly of the monster and came out bald and naked. His uncles gave him new garments and he set out again towards Filich. Then he met a waggon, on which lay the body of a murdered giant; one of his hands was dragging along the ground, making deep furrows in it and causing the earth to quake. The mother of the dead giant, who was walking behind the waggon, called Amiran to her and said: "I see you are a strong hero; lift up the hand of the murdered giant and put it into the waggon." Amiran did that without the least exertion. Then the mother

said to him: "You are the reason of the death of my son! If I were not in this state, I would show you what giant-strength is." Amiran went on, and everywhere he went he killed his enemies, so that soon there was not a single giant left, not only in Filich, but in all the surrounding countries. Then Amiran began to try his strength on ordinary people. Many Christians fell at his hands. But Jesus Christ put a stop to that. He once came down to earth in the form of a man and challenged Amiran to fight with Him. This combat was to take place on the top of one of the high Caucasian mountains. Jesus took a strap, put it round His throat, and then tore it into small pieces. Amiran did the same, only his strap changed into an enormous chain, and the hitherto unconquerable giant was bound with chains by this heavenly power. At the same time a huge mountain came rolling up, in the very interior of which there was a house of iron. And in that house Christ locked up Amiran, already bound with his iron chain. He lives there to this day; a faithful dog is his only servant, and year in, year out he licks the chain unceasingly in order to make it so thin that Amiran can break it. But every smith goes yearly on Green Thursday to his anvil and beats a few strokes with his hammer, whereby Amiran's chain regains its former thickness.

60. SUANETIAN VARIANT

ONE evening, when twilight was beginning to fall, the smith Daredjiani, who lived at the foot of Mount Elbruz, heard cries of despair which gave him no peace, from high up the mountain. He could not understand where

these cries came from. And as his curiosity grew stronger every moment, at last he forged himself a crowbar and a mattock and set off up the slopes of Elbruz. It was a difficult climb, but he helped himself up with this crowbar and mattock. At last he arrived at the top, looked round and saw a beautiful woman lying down at the foot of a precipice. She was weeping and crying out. All round about her lay heaps of gold and silver. Without waiting to think, the smith climbed down and asked the woman why she wept. She told him she was the wife of God, but that owing to some sin He had thrown her down that precipice. After that Daredjiani visited her often, and soon it appeared she was about to bear him a child.

In the meantime the wife of the smith began to be suspicious of his frequent absence from home. One day she followed him secretly and saw him talking to the woman at the foot of the precipice. From that day forward the wife of the smith determined to revenge herself on her rival. She learnt in some way that the whole strength and charm of the woman lay in her luxuriant hair, which covered her whole body with thick plaits. Now when the beautiful woman was fast asleep one day, the smith's wife stole up to her and shore off her hair. When the woman woke up and saw what had happened, she called the smith to her and said she must now soon die; he must, however, cut open her body and take out her child. But the smith would not. Then she cut her body open herself, took out the child and gave it to him with the words: "Take it and lay it at a cross-road; it will grow of itself."

The smith obeyed her command. Then one day Jesus Christ came, with St. George and the Angel of the Ways, and they saw the child lying there. They christened

it and gave it the name Amiran. And they said, "If Amiran breaks his word three times, he will fall into the power of the devil." Then they went on; but Amiran grew from that time, not only daily but hourly. In a short time he was full grown and of extraordinary strength.

One day he met a procession on the road. There was a waggon drawn by twelve pairs of oxen, and on the waggon lay a gigantic coffin, and in the coffin the body of a dead giant; one of his feet was dragging along the ground and scoring deep furrows in it. The people who followed the coffin were trying in vain to lift the foot into it. It appeared that the giant, when he became ill and felt that his end was near, had laid himself in his coffin, because he knew no one else would be able to do it. Amiran took hold of the foot with one hand and put it into the coffin. That pleased the giant and he said, "Give me your hand, little brother." But Amiran gave him a stone instead of his hand. The giant crushed it to dust, and repeated his request. This time Amiran handed him an oak beam, which the giant crushed into splinters. But at last Amiran gave him his hand. "May your hand wither away if you do not bring up my two sons," said the giant.

Amiran sought out the sons and brought them up. They grew fast and were very strong. Amiran often went hunting with them. Once it happened that Amiran fell fast asleep. The two young men watched by him while he slept. All at once there appeared, from who knows where, a great multitude of animals, who surrounded the sleeping Amiran. The two youths shot their arrows at them and killed them all. When Amiran awoke and saw the great pool of blood he thought, "Well, these two braves will perhaps kill me some day,"

and without waiting to consider it further he killed them both. But that was breaking his word, and from that moment the devil followed him.

Amiran went out hunting again one day. When he became tired he lay down to sleep, and the magic horse Raschi watched beside him. Then the demons came. Raschi wakened the sleeping man, but before he was properly awake the demons disappeared again. Amiran thought Raschi had deceived him and struck the animal. "From this time I will not waken you any more," said Raschi, "even if the demons come to eat you up." "I did that in a fit of passion," said Amiran, "I will never strike you again." Then he went to sleep again. Again the demons crawled out of the bushes and surrounded Amiran. Raschi wakened him, and again the demons had disappeared before he was thoroughly awake. He forgot his promise, and for the second time he struck Raschi. That was the second time he had broken his word. The third time soon followed, and then the demons had full power over him. They challenged him to fight them. It is true he killed a great number, but finally he was so exhausted that he could not move. The three demons who remained bound him hand and foot, carried him up to the summit of Mount Elbruz, threw him down a precipice and chained him with a heavy chain to an iron stake. They laid his sword near him, but so that he could not reach it. Opposite him they bound, to the same stake, a nine-headed Div, who also tried in vain to reach the sword. Whoever could reach it first would be the victor. But they would only be able to reach it when their nails grew long. The Suanetians wish that Amiran may get the sword, and so they never cut their nails on the first four days of the week. But . . . when Amiran's nails

get so long that he is nearly able to reach his sword, a bird who is set to watch him tells the demons. They come then and cut his nails.

Still, the time will come when Amiran will be able to reach his sword. Then he will kill the Div, free himself, and for Suanetia and every other Christian land, the Golden Age will dawn.

61. KABARDIAN VARIANT

A LONG, long time ago, a certain giant who had one eye in the middle of his forehead dared to penetrate into the secrets with which God had surrounded the summit of Mount Elbruz. He came to the saddle between the two peaks, from the rocks at the foot of which a well of crystal-clear water springs up. But God would not permit that, and chained the violator of His secrets with a long chain to the rocks. Many years have passed since then. The giant has grown old. His long beard reaches to his knees; his once mighty frame has become bent and his proud countenance is covered with wrinkles. To punish him still more God sent a bird of prey, which flies up every day to peck at the giant's heart. And when the tormented giant bends forward to drink, the bird swoops down and sucks up the water down to the last drop. The water of that spring has a wonderful power; whosoever drinks of it, will live for ever.

But a time will come when God will be angry with the sons of Adam. Then He will set the one-eyed giant free, and woe betide mankind. For he will wreak vengeance on them for his long sufferings.

62. ABKHASIAN VARIANT

IN olden times there lived in Abkhasia a beautiful virgin of noble birth. Already as a child she had taken a vow of perpetual virginity and her parents did not object, rather they helped her to keep her vow. And in spite of that it appeared she was about to have a child. But her parents awaited the day of its birth calmly, for they knew their daughter was innocent.

She gave birth to a boy, who grew very fast. When he was ten years old, he was already like a youth of twenty and was the handsomest boy of all the countryside. Abrskil—for that was his name—distinguished himself among his companions from his youth up for his bravery and daring. He did not spare himself in danger, but defended his country bravely against its enemies, on whom he took fearful revenge. And God protected him, the defender of his native land. Soon the fame of his bravery spread throughout Abkhasia and the neighbouring countries. His countrymen loved him, but the enemies of his land feared him. Many strangers begged for his protection. But with all that worship, Abrskil became so proud and haughty that he thought himself the equal of the Almighty, and so brought down the anger of the Lord upon him.

Abrskil relentlessly rooted out everyone with light hair and blue eyes, among his own countrymen as well as among his prisoners of war. They had the evil eye, he declared, and could bewitch men and animals. And the tribes of Aschwba and Khatsba he stamped out also. He struck down all the vines which spread their garlands across a path¹ where a rider was forced to bend

¹ In the Caucasus the vines are trained on trees and send their tendrils across from tree to tree.

down to get through below them, and he did that only in order that no one need bend his head, as he feared that might look as if he were bending in reverence to God. But God demanded of Abrskil that he should give up his wicked killing of people and cutting down of useful plants, and bow himself forty times in order to save his soul. But Abrskil refused to do this, for he said everyone bowed before him, he was higher than the people and was of equal standing with God. God spared him for a long time in the hope that he would repent of his conduct and amend it. But Abrskil remained defiant. Then God in His anger commanded His angels to take Abrskil prisoner, that He might punish him.

When Abrskil quarrelled with God, he looked out two places which seemed to him to offer protection. The one was on the top of the mountain Uartsachu, the other at a lonely place on the shore of the Black Sea. And so it came to pass that when the angels looked for him on the top of the mountain, Abrskil mounted his magic horse, Arasch,¹ which carried him with one spring to the shores of the Black Sea. There he rested and ate, while Arasch grazed on the meadow and drank the water of the sea. But when the horse scented the angels drawing near, he told his master he must mount, and carried him with one spring back again to the top of Uartsachu. There they rested again till the angels began to follow them. For a long time the angels sought for Abrskil in vain, and at last they turned to an old witch for help. She advised them to spread an ox-skin on the top of Uartsachu, to rub it with something slippery, then divide it in two parts,

¹ *Rasch* is identical with *Reksch*, Rustum's war-horse in Schahname. There is also in the sagas of Daghestan a magic horse called *Rasch*. There is no doubt they are identical.

one of which they should hide on the top of the mountain, the other at the sea-shore. And now when Abrskil, mounted on Arasch, sprang up to the mountain-top his horse slipped on the slippery skin. Abrskil fell off, hurt himself, and was seized and bound by the angels.

The report of his capture spread quickly over the whole of Abkhasia. How the people with fair hair and blue eyes rejoiced! But on the other hand, how grieved were Abrskil's friends! They did everything in their power to set him free, but in vain. For God had banished him to a cave with no access.

The angels had looked for such a place for a long time without finding one. Then they had again appealed to the witch, and she had showed them a cave near the village of Tschilou which lies at the foot of a spur of the Panaw chain. The witch declared that a giant had once been imprisoned there who had languished for three hundred years, and, thanks to the watchfulness of the old witch who owned the cave, had not been able to get out till God had forgiven him and let him go. To this cave the angels now took Abrskil and Arasch and recommended them to the special watchfulness of the old witch. She commanded her servants to forge a chain for the prisoner, and to watch him with the utmost care. From that moment Arasch began to lick the chain in order that Abrskil might be able to break it when he had licked it thinner. But the angels informed God the Lord with joy, that they had found a safe prison for Abrskil. And the Lord told the old woman not to let anyone near the prisoner, nor to give him anything to eat till he remorsefully confessed his sins.

The old woman left him to hunger for a long time, but at last she took pity on him and had food secretly taken to him. For doing that God changed her into a whelp,

who could only open its mouth to eat, when Arasch, through constant licking, had worn its chain as thin as a thread of silk. But as soon as the whelp opened its jaws to appease its hunger, the chain took on its former thickness again.

Though Abrskil had now languished so long in his cave, he never forgot his native land, but always dreamt of it. His dearest wish was to see someone from his own country who could tell him how it fared with his native land. And such a messenger appeared to him in the person of his chief admirer, a certain Djomlat.¹ He took a skilful guide and twenty asses laden with wax candles, and pushed right into Abrskil's cave. It was very dark in the recesses of the mountain, but when they lighted their candles they could see to push further into the cave. It was so low in some parts that they had to crawl on all-fours; in other parts they passed through great fields and fruit-gardens. They went further and further, but they found no trace of Abrskil. When all the candles were burned down they began to think of their return, but heard to their joy the voice of him they were seeking. He explained to them that all their exertions were useless, for the further they penetrated into the cave, the further he was pushed back into the mountain. Then he asked them if Aschwba and Khatsba were still living, and if there were still people with fair hair and blue eyes. Djomlat answered that everything was just as it had been before, and that the country bitterly bewailed the fate of its protector. "Unhappy Abkhasia! You are going to perdition!" groaned Abrskil.

When his visitors asked how they were to get out of the cave without candles, Abrskil advised them to turn

¹ Others say he was called Sasruqwa Antschabadse. It is easy to recognise the Sósryqo of the Nart Sagas in this Sasruqwa.

their asses round and hold on tightly to their tails; the animals would easily find the way out.

They stood silent for a long time, and then took farewell of each other. Djomlat returned to his home and Abrskil stayed in his cave, sad that he had not been allowed to see his compatriots. When Djomlat emerged from the cave, he found that he had been three days in it.

Abrskil still lives, and will only gain his freedom when someone succeeds in visiting him again. But Arasch is probably already dead.

63. OSSETIAN VARIANT

AMIRAN was an oppressor, and that was not pleasing to God. So He caught Amiran by cunning and ordered that he should be shut up in a cave. But one day a huntsman lost his way and God led him right up to the door of the cave in which Amiran was shut up. This door was of copper; God opened it, the huntsman stepped in, looked round, and as he saw Amiran, noticed that his eyes were as big as the collar of an ox.

The huntsman fell down in a swoon, but Amiran encouraged him: "Have no fear, my son! I am Amiran, chained up here by God's command." When the huntsman had taken courage he asked, "What tribe do you belong to? What kind of extraordinary creature are you, and what are you doing here?" "I am Amiran," he answered, "of the tribe of Daredsan. I was an oppressor of mankind, and gave mankind no peace. I fought with the Saints of God and looked down on God Himself. Then He let me feel His power, hunted me in here, and here I stand now in chains. Give me the straps of my sword and I will reward you handsomely." The hunts-

man tried to do as he was asked, pulled and pulled at the straps, but what could he do? "Have mercy on me!" he cried at last. "I cannot do it. It is beyond my power." "Well then, bind one of your arms to my sword-strap and then give me the other," said Amiran. The huntsman did as he was told. Amiran pulled his arm so hard that all the joints of the wretched man cracked. "Have mercy! Do not tear out my soul!" implored the huntsman. Amiran set him free and ordered him to go home and fetch the chain that hung over his hearth fire,¹ but without saying a single word and without turning round, otherwise the doors would shut-to again. The huntsman stumbled home backwards, tore off the chain and carried it away without saying a single word. But his friends and all the people of the village said, "He is surely mad. What is he going to do with the chain?" But the huntsman ran as fast as he could. When only a very short way lay between him and the cave, it pleased God to inspire him with the desire to look round. The door slammed-to and Amiran was left in the cave.

¹ In order to understand this it must be remembered that the chain which hangs down over the hearth fire is a holy thing in that district. The chain must on no account be taken away, or the immediate death of the whole household would follow. The stealing of such a chain is only to be avenged by the shedding of blood and brings vendetta in its train.

VI.—POLYPHEMUS SAGAS

64. MINGRELIAN VARIANT

A DARK, wet night once overtook a traveller on the road between Redut-Kale and Anaklia (on the eastern shore of the Black Sea). In the midst of a wood, far from any human habitation, a herd of wolves surrounded him and tried to drag him off his horse. The horse stopped dead and could not be made to go on either by persuasions or threats. What good was it to the traveller that he had tied little sticks to the tail of his horse? ¹ The wolves tried to seize him in spite of that. Cold terror seized the poor man, his sword hung useless in his hand. There remained only one thing for him to do, to cry for help as loud and long as his lungs could serve him. Then a light appeared in the distance, the wolves disappeared, and the horse galloped towards the light. It was a torch held by a man who lived in the one little house of that district, who had hastened out when he heard the cry for help. The traveller warmed himself in the hut and then told his host what had happened to him. But his host had a far more dreadful story to tell.

“Brother,” said he, “you think you are unfortunate because the creatures there in the wood attacked you. No, if you only knew what I have to bear in my heart, you would be thankful that nothing worse happened to

¹ The Mingrelians consider that a good way to protect themselves from wolves: to bind a few little sticks to the tails of their horses.

you. You will notice that we all wear mourning here. We were seven brothers, all fishermen. We often stayed out in our ship for months at a time, and only sent in a boat once a week with the fish. But one day we noticed, just as we had thrown out our nets, that our ship was being carried away from land—something was drawing her away and we could not stop her. So she sailed on and on and on; after some weeks we saw a rocky shore before us, from which a river of honey flowed.

“Our ship was pulled right up to this honey-stream. As we got quite near it an enormous fish came up underneath our ship, its jaws over a fathom broad. He swallowed the honey with such greed that the stream was almost dried up. That was the biggest of all fish; he swam to this place to eat the honey, but in Anaklia he ate maize. It seemed that our nets had caught in his fins, and that was how he had dragged us with him. Now while he was eating the honey, we quietly cut through the net which attached us to him. The fish swam away and we were left behind. But we did not know where we were. We laughed with delight at seeing land again, but we wept with anxiety as to our fate.

“Then we took counsel as to what was to be done. We agreed to load up the ship with honey and wax from the stream, and then to follow along the shore always in the same direction. We loaded honey for a whole week, and on the day before we were to sail we saw that a flock of sheep and goats was approaching the honey-stream. The shepherd was a giant and one-eyed. He held a stick as thick as a pillar in his hand, and he twirled it round like a spindle. A dreadful fear took hold of us. The giant pulled our ship ashore and drove us with his herd to a great building which stood in the

midst of a wood. The trees were so high that one could not see the tops of them. Even the rushes were as high and as thick as oak-trees are with us.

“The gigantic building itself was formed of enormous blocks of undressed stone, and was divided up inside into several different divisions for the different kinds of animals: the goats, the sheep, the lambs and the kids had each their own divisions. The one-eyed giant locked us in and then drove away his herd. We tried to break open the door, but in vain. Like mice in a mouse-trap, we ran round and round and up and down from morning till night. In the evening our one-eyed giant came back, locked up his animals and lighted a fire. He laid whole trunks of trees upon it. Then he took a roasting-spit, fetched himself a fat sheep and roasted it, without preparing it in any way. Nay, he even did not kill it, but stuck it living on the spit. The beast struggled in the flames till its eyes burst. The giant ate up the whole sheep, lay down and began to snore. Next morning he ate two more sheep, but in the evening he took the fattest of us brothers, stuck him on the spit and began to roast him. Our brother struggled dreadfully, and screamed for help. But what could we do? When our brother's eyes burst, the one-eyed giant tore off one of his legs and threw it to us, the rest he ate up himself. We buried the leg. On the following days it was the turn of my other brothers; finally only my youngest brother and myself were left. We were almost mad with fear and horror, and longed for death—no such dreadful death after all. Now when he had eaten the fifth brother and lay snoring at the fire, we two stole quietly up to the roasting-spit which he had stuck into the ground beside him and pulled it out with great difficulty. We put it into the fire and waited in fear and trembling

till it became red-hot. Then we thrust the red-hot spit into his one eye. The blinded giant sprang up with such fury in his pain that we thought he would break through the roof, but he only made a great wound in his head. With dreadful screams he rushed through the whole building, trampling sheep and goats to death under his great feet. But he could not find us because we always slipped through between his legs. Next morning the animals began to make a noise because they wanted to go out to the meadow. The giant opened the door, stood in front of it and let the sheep and goats pass singly through between his legs, feeling the back, the head and the body of each. He did that till midday; then he got tired of it and contented himself with touching the back of each creature as it passed through. Happily, my brother had still a knife. We skinned two sheep with it, covered ourselves with the skins and determined to creep through between his legs. Half dead with fright, I tried my luck first. The giant noticed nothing. I was outside. My brother followed. We went at once to our ship, which still lay at the same spot. Our hopes of saving our lives increased. In the meantime the herd of the one-eyed giant came along. We picked out the finest animals and took them with us on to the ship. But hardly had we cut the anchor rope, when the giant appeared and felt for our ship. When we were out of his reach, we called out our names to him that he might know who had played such an evil game with him. Full of rage he sent his blows thrashing after us; so heavy were they that the sea foamed up and our vessel nearly went to the bottom. After making many false starts in various directions, and after many privations, we arrived home at last."

65. URÝSMÄG AND THE ONE-EYED GIANT

URÝSMÄG once came back from one of his many wanderings and found the Narts sitting together in sorrowful mood. "What is wrong with you, Narts?" Urýsmäg cried to them. "You look as if you had just buried what was dearest to you."

"Well, whoever will show himself a man, let him stand forth!" they cried. "Old Urýsmäg will lead us, perhaps we shall prosper in our adventures." The best of them bestirred themselves, and set out with Urýsmäg on their travels. They journeyed a long, long way till they could hardly go any further from tiredness and hunger. All of a sudden Urýsmäg saw, at the foot of a mountain, a shepherd of extraordinary size, who was herding a flock of sheep.

"Now, you fellows," asked Urýsmäg, "which of you will fetch us a fat sheep for supper?" And as no one offered to go and take the sheep, he determined to go himself. Like an arrow he darted off, galloped up to the shepherd, sprang off his horse, and took the best sheep, which was as big as an ordinary ox, from the flock. But he could not hold the creature; it pulled him along with it, and so Urýsmäg fell into the hands of the one-eyed giant. "Ah, my good Bodsol," the giant said to the sheep, "that is a fine roast you have brought me there! I thank you." So saying he seized Urýsmäg and stuffed him into his knapsack.

But Urýsmäg was hungry and at once began to rout about and eat the herdsman's provisions. "What are you stirring about there for?" cried the giant. "Be quiet! If I squeeze you, I will break your ribs."

In the meantime the sun was approaching the horizon and the shepherd drove his flock homewards—that is, to a cave—the entrance to which he closed with a huge boulder. The boulder fitted so closely to the opening that not even a ray of sunlight could get through.

“Bring the roasting-spit,” the giant ordered his son, “I am going to roast myself a tasty morsel that Bodsol brought me to-day.” When the son had brought the spit, the giant seized Urýsmäg, stuck him on the spit, which he put at the fire, and then lay down to sleep. As it happened, however, the spit had not gone through Urýsmäg himself, but between his clothes and his body, so that, as soon as the giant began to snore, Urýsmäg was able to free himself. He stuck the spit right into the fire till it became red-hot. Then he drove it right into the giant’s one eye. The blinded giant roared terribly and vowed he would catch Urýsmäg, even although he was blind. Urýsmäg contrived also to kill the giant’s son. From rage and fury the giant bit his own finger, but that did not do him any good. In the morning the sheep began to bleat because they were hungry and wanted to get out to graze. “Just wait,” the giant said to Urýsmäg, “you are not going to escape me.” Then he rolled the boulder away from the mouth of the cave, stood in front of it and let the animals go out one by one.

There was in the herd a large white goat with long horns, the giant’s favourite. Urýsmäg killed this goat, pulled the skin over himself, and went on all-fours to the mouth of the cave. “Is it you, Gurtschi?” said the giant as he touched the skin. “Go on, my clever fellow, herd the sheep well for me, and bring them back to me in the evening. I must stay here and punish that shameless wretch who has blinded me. Now go, go on.” And with that he stroked the skin and let him out.

Urýsmäg waited outside till the whole flock had come out of the cave. Then he called out to the giant, "Hullo, I am here, you blind donkey." The giant was beside himself with rage and fury, but Urýsmäg drove the flock over to the Narts, who killed several sheep and entertained their friends. The rest of the flock the Narts drove back to their own home, where they divided the spoil.

"Nay," said one of the Narts, "that will never do. Urýsmäg must have another share. We would have died of hunger if the old white-beard had not saved us." As no one had any objection to offer, each gave a part of his share to Urýsmäg. And none of them now looked so sorry for themselves as they had done before.

VII.—SOLOMON THE WISE

66

SOLOMON THE WISE had a servant. When he had served his time his master asked him, "Which would you rather have, your wages or three pieces of good advice?" The servant renounced his wages and asked for the advice, and Solomon said:

"Tell no one your secrets.

"Do not lend anything without being asked for it.

"Here is a little stick; draw over it the skin of a serpent you will find on the wayside, and set it up in your courtyard."

The servant thanked him and went his way. He found the skin of a serpent, drew it over the stick, and stuck it up in the centre of the courtyard when he got home. After some time a great tree grew out of the stick, which bore golden fruit. He plucked the golden fruit and hid it in chests. So he rapidly grew rich and married.

One day, during his absence, three Armenians came to his wife and asked her for permission to spend the night in her house, which she granted them. When the three saw the tree with the golden fruit, they opened their eyes wide. They made up their minds, whatever happened, they would steal the tree from its owner. Next they asked the woman how her husband had come by the tree. But she did not know, and told them so. The three did not cease from questioning her and promised her a handsome reward if she could only find out and tell them.

268

When the master of the house came home at night, his wife began at once to beset him with questions. But he still had Solomon's first counsel firmly in his mind and did not tell anything. His wife gave him no peace, however, and at last she achieved her end. Then she ran at once to the Armenians and told them what she had heard. The three went to the master of the house and told him he must either sell them the tree or they would take it by force. He refused, but as they would not give up their intention, he made a bargain with them, if they could guess who had given him the tree they could take it, but if not they should pay a fine. Needless to say, the Armenians won the wager.

Full of sorrow and anger the servant ran to Solomon, told him his misfortunes, and asked his advice as to how he could get back his tree. But Solomon was angry with him and said, "Did I not advise you to tell no one your secret? Go now and put another riddle before the Armenians; they must guess where the sun rises." He ran home at once and gave the Armenians this riddle; if they could not guess the answer, then they must give him back his tree. They agreed to this. "Good," said the master of the house. "Where does the sun rise?" Although that was really not difficult, they could not guess the right answer, for Solomon the Wise had helped his servant, and when the Armenians said "In the East," the sun suddenly changed round and rose in the West, and if they said "In the West," then it rose in the East. So he got his tree back again. And from that time he often visited Solomon and got much good advice from him.

Now one day the king's vizier came to Solomon¹ and invited him to the king's table. (Solomon's old servant

¹ Solomon is not a king in this story.

happened to be with him at the time.) But Solomon refused the invitation; he and his servant were busy, he said. The king sent him a second message to say he must come and bring his servant with him. This time Solomon agreed to go and took the servant (whom we have met already) with him. During dinner the king asked for a knife. Solomon's former servant pulled out his knife and handed it to the king. Now the king wished to test Solomon's powers. So he said to his servant, "But that is my knife! Who gave it to you?" The servant suddenly remembered Solomon's second counsel, but it was too late. He could think of no reply to give the king, and so by his orders the poor servant was locked up in a separate room. At the same time an order was given that Solomon was not to be allowed to see the prisoner, so that he might not help him to escape.

That was just what Solomon wanted to do. How was it to be done? Guards surrounded the house; if one even spoke above a whisper, they heard everything. But as he thought over what could be done, he suddenly saw a cat in the corner of the room the king had assigned to him. He caught it and struck it on the head. The cat squealed and Solomon said in a clear voice, "You wretched cat! Did I not tell you you should not lend anything unasked? Now go to the king and say to him that that knife was found sticking in your father's body, that the murderer has not yet been caught, and that the king therefore must be the murderer if the knife really belongs to him." Now the servant who was locked up not far from Solomon's room heard all this, and when he was asked on the following day where he had got the knife, he repeated Solomon's words. The king did not know what to say, and so he not only set the servant free, but gave him gifts as well.

67

THERE was once a king who appropriated every foal that was born in his kingdom, because he said it was descended from one of his mares. But Solomon, who was still quite young at the time, came to him and hired himself as the king's kennelman. One day Solomon began to beat the dogs with all his might. When the king heard of it he called him and asked why he beat the dogs.

"Why should I not beat them?" answered Solomon. "The wolves have stolen a calf from my village, and your dogs did not give chase."

"Have you lost your senses?" cried the king. "How can my dogs know what happens in your village? How could you even imagine such a thing?"

"And you, O king, how do you imagine that all foals born who knows where, are descended from one of your mares?"

The king was much embarrassed, and from that day he appropriated other people's foals no more.

68

DURING Solomon's reign, a hermit, to whom people from all quarters made pilgrimages, lived in a cave not far from Jerusalem. Solomon once made up his mind to go and visit him himself to ask his advice, and took his favourite courtier with him. But the hermit knew through a divine inspiration that the king was coming to him, and prepared for his reception by sweeping his cell and leaving the sweepings lying in the middle of it. Then he took off all his garments, threw a cloth over his shoulders and waited on the threshold, holding

his mouth with his right hand. When King Solomon and his courtier drew near, the latter said, "Sire, that is enough. Let us go home."

"Why then? We have come for advice; it would be a pity to go home without getting what we came for," Solomon replied.

"We have the advice already," the courtier said. "Come away; I will explain it to you."

And when they got home the courtier gave the following explanation of what he had seen: "The sweepings stand for our earthly possessions. By standing at his threshold, the hermit wished to let us know that we are merely temporary inhabitants of this world. The cloth over his shoulders signified that all we need of the goods of this world is a winding-sheet. By holding his mouth he meant to tell us that man's most dangerous enemy is his tongue; he must keep it shut so that it may not babble."

The king was so well content with this explanation that he richly rewarded his courtier.

69

ONE of Solomon's wives wanted him to build her a castle of birds' feathers. Solomon sent for all the birds in the world, and began to pull out their feathers. The birds came flying up, all except the owl. She did not come. The king sent for her and asked her why she had not come before.

"O wise king," began the owl, "in order to satisfy a mood of one of your wives, you rob us of our beauty and our protection against the weather. For your sake I would give not only my feathers but my head as well, if necessary. But how can one build a castle with

feathers? The first gentle wind will strew our feathers in all directions and your work will be in vain. Have pity on us!"

Solomon gave up his plan and ordered that three sparrows should fly to that owl every day to serve her as food.¹

¹ According to native folk-lore, that goes on to this day.

VIII.—STORIES OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

70

As soon as Alexander of Macedonia came into the world, he ran round the room. But when he came to the fourth corner an angel knocked him down to let him understand that he would only conquer three-quarters of the world.

71

WHEN Alexander died, his mother mourned him so bitterly that she would not give permission for his body to be buried. When the courtiers saw that they could not persuade her with words, they suggested to her that she should fast beside the body of her dead son. She agreed. Then she was shut up in a room, from the roof of which a loaf of bread was hung. The mother mourned her son for three whole days. On the fourth day she became very hungry, and when she became aware of the bread hanging from the roof she wanted to get it down. But as it hung very high up, she stood on the body of her son to reach it. The courtiers, who were watching her, then said to her:

“You would not allow the body of your son to be buried because you regarded it as an insult to his memory, but you did not hesitate to stand on his body in order to get bread for yourself.”

Then she saw that her courtiers were right, and gave permission that her son should be buried.

2, 4

MANY, many years ago there lived a king — Alexander of Macedonia. He conquered three-quarters of the world; only the fourth quarter, which was inhabited by the *Just Poor*, was not conquered. This part of the world was separated from the rest of the world by a sea which was called by the same name as that people.

Now Alexander wanted to conquer that quarter too. He collected a great army and set out toward that sea. He threw a bridge over it and was about to cross it with his army, when an angel of God appeared to him and said, "Alexander! By command of God you must not make war on these people. If your ambition will not allow you to retreat from this campaign, then let your army go over first and watch if even one man arrives with his head on his shoulders. Then you can go over yourself." Alexander did as he was told; he let his army go over the bridge and saw that every man lost his head. Spurred on by his pride, he himself crossed the bridge and lost his head. Then the *Just Poor* assembled and stoned him and his whole army.

IX.—KNAVISH TRICKS

73. THE SKILFUL THIEF

THERE were once two brothers, Iwane and Simon, both were thieves. Iwane died and left a seven-year-old son called Peter. When he grew up his uncle Simon, who had brought him up, asked him what he would like to be. "I should like to learn the trade of my father," answered Peter. "Your father was a thief," his uncle said, "so you shall be a thief too. To learn your trade, try first to pull out a feather from a bird sitting on a tree so that the bird will not notice it." Peter asked his uncle to show him first how it was done. So they went to a wood, where Simon climbed a tree and pulled a feather out of a dove which was sitting there. But while he was intent on doing that, his nephew stole away his underclothing off his body. When he came down off the tree he showed Peter the feather. "You have pulled a feather out of the dove's wing," said Peter, "but during that time I have taken off your underclothing and you have not noticed it." The uncle was greatly astonished and proposed to his nephew that, seeing he was such a good thief, he should steal some money out of the king's treasury. Peter had no objection, and so they went at night to the treasury, broke in, and took much money away with them.

When the theft was noticed next day the thief was sought for, but in vain. The king was very indignant

about it, but what was to be done? A king of a neighbouring country made fun at his expense, because a thief could not be found in his country. In the meantime Simon and Peter paid another visit to the treasury, and again could not be caught. The king was angry and had a big hole dug under the window by which the thieves had broken in, and the hole filled with hot wax. When Simon and Peter tried their luck for the third time, Simon fell into the hole and could not get out again. Then he asked Peter to cut off his head and take it home. Peter fulfilled this request. The next day the guards found Simon's body, and in order to find out whose it was, they exposed it openly and watched the passers-by to see if anyone wept at the sight. But no one obliged them in that respect.

Now Simon's wife wanted above all to mourn for her husband. Only she did not know how she could do it without betraying him. But Peter knew. "Buy yourself some crockery, and when you pass by your husband's body, drop your dishes, then you will have an excuse for weeping as much as you like." This advice seemed to her good and easily carried out. And how she wept! So touching was her grief that the guards gave her six times as many dishes as she had broken.

But now she wanted also to have the body of her husband, that she might give it honourable burial. Peter knew here also what to do. He mounted a donkey and, riding up to the guards, said to them he must see the king without fail. They told him the king was busy that day with important business and could receive no one. As Peter insisted, they advised him to stay there, so that next morning he would be the first to be admitted to the king. But Peter would not hear of that: he was afraid that the dead man without the head would

eat up his donkey. "Nonsense," said the guards, "a dead man cannot eat a donkey. If he does, we will pay you twenty times more than the price of your donkey." Now Peter was satisfied. He stayed and plied the guards liberally with wine and spirits till they were all drunk and fell asleep. Peter also pretended to go to sleep. But when all the others were sleeping, he got up, laid the dead body on his donkey, and sent it home alone. Then he lay down again beside the guards. When they got up next morning, Peter uttered a dreadful scream: "The dead man *has* eaten my donkey! My donkey! My donkey!" What could the guards do? Alarmed at the loss of the body and afraid of their own carelessness being found out, they had to keep their promise and pay Peter twenty times the value of his donkey. And they had to implore him, moreover, not to tell the king that the body had disappeared. Then Peter went home and buried his uncle.

When the king heard of this, he gathered all his people together and challenged them to tell the truth. "The thief must give himself up," he said. "I will not only not punish him, but will, on the contrary, reward him." Then one of the multitude stepped forward—it was Peter—and said, "I am the thief." The king invited him into his palace and said, "Listen! the king of the neighbouring kingdom laughed at me because I could not find the thief who had robbed me. Arrange that he shall no longer have cause to laugh at me." "Give me a good horse," said Peter, "two boxes, one devil's head-dress, and one burka" (Caucasian fur cloak) "with bells on it, and leave the rest to me." Peter was given all that he wanted, and then set out. When he arrived at the court of the other king, he went straight into the royal bedroom. The king and queen were both asleep.

Peter went up to the bed and shook so that the bells on his cloak jingled. The queen wakened first, and when she saw before her a being with the head of a devil she was terribly frightened.

"I am St. George," Peter said to her; "God has sent me to lead you into Paradise." Then the king awoke and was no less frightened than the queen. "I am St. George," Peter repeated; "God has sent me to lead you to Paradise." "If that is so, then be quick about it," said the king. Peter did not hesitate. He put the king in one box, the queen in the other, carried them out into the courtyard, and loaded them on his horse. Then he mounted himself and rode home to his master.

The two monarchs in the boxes thought they were really going to Paradise, and asked Peter again and again if it was still far. Peter always replied that it was not much further, and when he arrived at the courtyard of his own king he called out, "Here we are already," unloaded the boxes, carried them into the palace, and put them before the king. When he opened them, a naked king and an equally naked queen stepped out of the boxes and were sore ashamed. But the king said to his naked guests, "Look! that is my thief. Are you still surprised that I could not find him? Have you a thief like that too? If so, I can only wish he may carry out your commands as well as my thief has carried out mine."

Then he rewarded Peter handsomely, made him the first man in the kingdom, and ordained that after his own death Peter should be king.

74. THE CUNNING COUPLE

In a certain country there once lived a man and wife. They were unlucky and became very poor. They did not know what to do. When there was nothing more in the house, the wife told her husband to take his gun out and see if he could find something to eat. After he had gone she herself went to a neighbour, begged the loan of a silk dress, put it on and went out on the road. There she met a shepherd. "Where are you going?" he asked her. "I am looking for a husband," she said. "If you would like me, you can have me," said the shepherd. "Very good," she replied, "come to me this afternoon."

When the shepherd had gone, she met an Armenian who was travelling about selling his wares. He also asked her what she was looking for and she gave him the same answer. When the Armenian proposed she should marry him, she agreed and told him to come to her house that evening.

A little further on she met a miller. When he asked her what she was looking for, she answered for the third time that she was looking for a husband. He offered to marry her as the other two had done, and she asked him to come at night.

Soon after midday the shepherd arrived, and with much he-he-ing and tsch-tsch-ing drove his flock into the courtyard. Then he came into the house and sat down with a deep sigh. The woman prepared a couch for him and went on with her work. But she told the shepherd she was going to get him something to eat. Hardly had she gone out when the Armenian came up,

puffing and blowing. "Who is that?" asked the shepherd astonished. "That is my husband," she replied; "be quick and hide yourself in that barrel, otherwise it will be the worse for you." She hid the shepherd in the barrel and ran out again to welcome the Armenian, who had arrived in the courtyard with a whole waggonful of goods. She put the waggon in the barn, and then asked the Armenian to come in, prepared a couch for him, and left him under pretext of preparing a meal for him.

In the meantime night had fallen. All of a sudden a loud call was heard outside: "Ho! ho! ho! ho!" It was the miller who had arrived with a waggon of flour. "What does he want?" asked the Armenian. "Hush, that is my husband," she answered; "see that you hide yourself somewhere or there will be trouble. Better still, lie down in the cradle there and whinge like a child." She had hardly stuffed him into the cradle and covered him up, when the miller came in. "Good evening," she said; "sit down. You must be tired. Wait a moment till I get you something to eat." But hardly had she busied herself among the cooking utensils than again steps were heard outside. This time it really was her husband returning from his day's shooting. "Who is it, then?" asked the miller. "That is my husband who was away shooting. Come quickly behind the door and bleat like a calf; then I will tell my husband our cow has calved." And immediately, with many ah's and oh's, her husband came into the room. "Ah, how tired I am!" he said, and sat down. Then he saw that someone was lying in the cradle. "Who is that, then?" he asked his wife. "That is a little boy I have just had." "Really," said the husband, "has a new-born child already a beard like that? I will shave it away at once." So saying, he shaved

the Armenian lying in the cradle. Then he heard something bleating behind the door. "And what is that?" he asked his wife. "That is the calf our cow had to-day," she answered. Her husband only said, "Well, well!" But he took his gun and pointed it at the miller, who rushed out and tore away, head over heels. Then he in the barrel could stand it no longer and rushed after the miller as fast as his legs could carry him.

But the couple took the Armenian's goods, the miller's flour-bags, and the shepherd's flock. They became rich and lived happily to the end of their lives.

75. THE THREE THIEVING BROTHERS

THERE was once a poor man who had three sons. They were all very like each other; the same size, the same voice, the same manner. They could only be distinguished by their names: the eldest was called Hadji, the second Nadr, the youngest Bădyr. When their father died, they inherited an empty house and a goat. A year after their father's death they determined to divide their inheritance, but as there was so little to divide they gave it all to the eldest, and the two younger brothers removed to another village. Soon they regretted the whole affair, and made up their minds to go to Hadji and ask him to give them back the goat at least. When Hadji heard why they had come, he drove them out of the house. So they made up their minds to steal the goat during the night. But Hadji had got wind of their intention; he killed the animal and hid it, with the help of his wife, in a hay-rick. When the brothers came at night they found the house locked up and Hadji and

his wife sleeping. They looked everywhere for the goat, but in vain. Then they climbed on to the roof, Bädyr let himself down into the house by a rope, went up to the bed where the couple were sleeping, lay down beside Hadji's wife, wakened her gently and asked, "Wife, where was it again that we hid the goat?" Still half asleep she answered, "Ah, how stupid you are! Have you forgotten already that we killed it and hid the meat in the hay-rick?" Now Bädyr had found out what he wanted; he made Nadr a sign to draw him up again, and then they got the dead goat out of the hay-rick. An hour later Hadji woke up, learnt from his wife what had happened, got up and ran after his brothers. Now one of the brothers had fallen a little behind in order to mend his shoe. Hadji overtook him, passed him unnoticed, and made up to the other brother who was carrying the goat. When he overtook him he said, "Brother, you are tired. Give me the goat now and rest a little." Nadr thought it was Bädyr who was speaking to him, gave Hadji the goat, and they went on. But Hadji purposely went slower than his brother, and at the first favourable opportunity he disappeared in the direction of his own village. Soon afterwards Bädyr overtook Nadr, saw that he was not carrying the goat, and asked him what had happened. "Well," said Nadr, "did you not take the goat from me yourself?" "No," said Bädyr. Then they realised that Hadji had played a trick upon them, turned post-haste, and ran after him. Bädyr arrived first at Hadji's house, went in, put on the clothes of Hadji's wife, sat down near the door, and awaited Hadji. And he had not long to wait. In the darkness he naturally thought he was speaking to his wife, and said, "Wife, come here quickly, and help me to hide the goat before my brothers come." But Bädyr explained with signs

and gestures that robbers had come while Hadji was away, and that they were now in the stable. Hadji thought his wife had lost her voice from fright at this occurrence, laid down the goat and ran to the stable. Bädyr pulled off his woman's clothes, took the goat, and made off home with Nadr, who had just come up. In the meantime Hadji came back from the stable, where he had found no one, and saw to his amazement that his wife was in bed and fast asleep. He wakened her up, questioned her, and discovered that his brothers had tricked him again. He ran off after them at once, but could not overtake them. Then he climbed up on the roof of his brothers' house and saw through the smoke that they were dividing the goat-flesh. But to do it fairly they required a weighing-machine, and as they had none Nadr went to a neighbour to borrow one. Hadji made use of this opportunity, and called out to Bädyr, "The neighbour will not lend me his weighing-machine. You go and get one somewhere." "Go yourself to someone else," answered Bädyr. Hadji waited a little while and then called again, "No one will lend me weights." "Come down and stay by the goat, then. I will go myself and see if I cannot raise weights somewhere," called Bädyr, who thought all the time it was Nadr speaking to him down the chimney.¹ Hadji naturally fulfilled his request with pleasure, quickly gathered all the meat together, ran home, put on a fire and began to roast it. But Nadr and

¹ There is nothing impossible in this. In the district from which this story comes many of the dwellings are half underground, with flat, easily climbed roofs. And the roofs of houses which do stand quite above ground are easily mounted from the side, where they rest against unevennesses of the ground.

Baron von Haxthausen in his *Transcaucasia*, writing of the house of the Georgian peasant, says: "The rafters are covered with a flat roof of turf and earth on which the inhabitants pass the evening and sometimes the night likewise."—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

Bädyr found the nest empty when they came back to their house with the weights. They saw at once who had outwitted them and regretted their disobedience to their eldest brother, to whom of course, according to custom and usage, they were obliged to submit. So they made up their minds to ask his pardon. Hadji granted it generously when he saw them on their knees before him, kissed them, and invited them to come and eat the goat with him.

X.—NATIONAL ROMANCES

76. WHO IS THE MOST STUPID?

ONCE upon a time there were two mullahs, who went for a walk together. A rider met them, who wished them good-day. At once the two began to quarrel. "It was me he greeted." "No, it was me."

"But certainly not. It was me he greeted."

"No, no. I tell you it was me."

And they quarrelled so long over it that at last they began to fight. Then one of them had the bright idea that it would be better to ask the rider himself which of them he had really greeted. He suggested this to the other, who agreed; and so they ran after the rider, calling him with all their might, waving with their papachen (the well-known fur cap worn in the Caucasus). When at last the horseman noticed them, they called him to stop.

"What do you want, then?" he asked when they came up to him.

"We want to know which of us two you greeted as you passed," said the mullahs.

"But naturally I greeted you both," answered the horseman.

"No, that is not true, you only said good-day to one of us, but to which?" one of them asked; and they pressed the horseman so long that at last he said he had meant his greeting for the stupider of the two, and they could settle between themselves which that was.

Then another great altercation began: "I am the more

stupid!" "No, I am!" And they argued and argued till the horseman could stand it no longer. "You will never settle the question that way," he said. "Each of you must tell me the stupidest thing he has ever done in his life, and then we will soon find out which of you is the more stupid."

"I had once thirty pupils," began one of them, "who wished me *good health* every time I sneezed. I forbade them one day, and said they were not to say that any more, but to clap their hands instead.

"Now it happened there was a holiday and we were to hold a festival in the court of the mosque. But first a hole must be dug. My wife and I began to dig it. I dug and my wife took away the earth. Then all at once she said as I had thirty scholars I might as well take two of them to help me. So I called two of them and told them to pull me out of the hole. They gave me a rope which I bound round me, then I took a sack full of earth in one hand and had myself pulled up.

"But when I was nearly at the top I had to sneeze, and at once the pupils let go the rope and clapped their hands as I had ordered them to do. I fell down, broke my arm, knocked a hole in my head, and knocked out one of my eyes."

"But I had forty pupils," began the other, "who wished me *good-morning* every day when I came into the school. I could not stand it any longer, and I said we would never say anything to each other except what was absolutely necessary. But one day I was not very well. They laid me on a rug and carried me to a neighbour. 'Our teacher is ill,' they said. I said nothing. Then they made soup for me, but ate it themselves and then declared that I was dead. Again I said nothing. Then they called in a mullah, who washed me and wrapped me

in grave-clothes. I said nothing. Then one of the pupils secretly stuffed a piece of dolma¹ into my mouth, said I had come alive again, but my cheek was swollen and must be cut open. Then they called a doctor. And all the time I said nothing. The doctor cut my cheek open, took out the piece of dolma, and said there had been an abscess in my cheek. Then I got up and went without a word to my own house, where I bound up my cheek."

"It was you I greeted," said the horseman, turned his horse and rode away.

77. THE STUPID WIFE

A MAN had two wives, one clever and one stupid. One day the man went out to the fields with his clever wife and told the stupid one to "mind the door," meaning, of course, "look after the house." So she sat down beside the door and guarded it till she got wearied. Then she took the door off its hinges and went with it to her neighbours. When the husband and the clever wife came home they saw that neither the door nor the stupid wife were there. But at last, after they had waited a long time, the stupid wife came back, bringing the door with her. When she was asked what was the meaning of all that, the stupid wife answered she had been told to look after the door, which command she had faithfully carried out. But she received many blows for her pains. That seemed to her too stupid; she ran away to the fields and climbed up into a tree. After a little while a hen with her chickens came to the tree, and when she

¹ A piece of dried meat steamed in vine-leaves.

clucked to call her children to her, the stupid wife thought the hen was begging her to go home, and called down from the tree, "No, I will not go home. I will not go home at any price." Then a dog came, and barked. Again the stupid wife thought it was addressing her, and she called out the same refusal to the dog. Finally a camel arrived; the stupid woman thought she could not dare to refuse the camel, so she climbed down, tied her neckerchief round its throat, and led it home with her. When her husband and the clever wife saw her coming back and bringing a camel with her, they were glad and said, "Take care. There is going to be heavy rain to-day which will blind people. If you don't want to be blinded, then go and sit in the oven." But they only said that because they had plans of their own. Hardly had the stupid wife crawled into the oven, than they killed the camel and hid its flesh as well as the money they found on its back. Soon after this an unknown traveller came along; the owner of the camel had sent him to look for the missing animal. "If I ask them straight out whether they have the camel, they are sure to deny it," he thought; "it will be better to say that an invalid fancies a little piece of camel-meat, can they give me any?" And he asked them this, but they both replied that they had none. The stupid wife, however, had heard everything from her hiding-place, and called out, "How then? Where have you put the flesh of the camel I brought you?" The messenger now knew what he wanted; he went to the owner of the camel and told him what had happened. He had the thieves brought before him and called them to account. But they declared stoutly that they knew nothing about it. And so the only witness, the stupid wife, was called. She came, and when she saw that the owner of the camel was blind

she asked him if the heavy rain had blinded him. "Ah," said he, "she is out of her mind. One can't believe what she says." So saying he drove her away.

78. A PROBLEM

A WOMAN of Lahitsch ¹ was once busy making dough. She had leaned her dish up against one of the posts which supported the beams of the roof and put her bag of flour behind the same post. She kneaded and kneaded; but all at once she found that the dough was not thick enough, and that she must add more flour. So she dipped both hands into the bag of flour, and between her arms the post towered up on high. She turned and twisted, and went round the post; it just stood where it was and did not stir from its place. But not to let the flour fall? That was the difficulty. In her despair she called her husband. He came, saw the difficulty, and . . . saw no solution except to call for more help. And now, when the children also came and began to cry, the neighbours arrived. They were no more helpful; one tried to see if it would help if he carried the dish to the other side of the post, another shoved the bag of flour to the side, but the unfortunate woman still stood there with the flour between her two hands and the post between her arms. At last they made up their minds to send for Aqsaqal ² (the head man of the village). He came, saw the situation, thought carefully over it, asked everyone as to the how, the why, and the when, and found at last only one solution. The post must be cut down. They ran

¹ Lahitsch is a village in the district of Schemache. The inhabitants are hardy coppersmiths but have the reputation of great narrow-mindedness.

² *Aqsaqal* means White-beard.

for axes, the splinters flew, everyone waited with eagerness to see the result of Aqsagal's wisdom. They did not need to wait long. A crack—the post swayed—a part of the roof fell down and buried half the onlookers.

79. THE FIELD OF SALT

THE village of Lahitsch lies in the mountains far from any town, and so the villagers are often in need of various things, and particularly of salt. In order to remedy this misfortune, two of the villagers—two brothers—made up their minds to sow salt, then they would never again need to go to town for salt, and they could perhaps make money by selling it as well. No sooner said than done. A large field was sown with salt. When spring came, it lay there black and naked while all the fields around it were green and fertile.

“Why in the world does our salt not come up?” said one of the brothers to the other: “perhaps someone has stolen it from us. We will look and see.” And so they wandered away down to their field of salt, and found there a great swarm of flies of the kind generally to be met with on saltish ground. “There we are! They have eaten up our salt! Shoot them dead, shoot them dead!” And a tremendous firing began. When they were tired of shooting, they sat down to rest and have a bite of food. The flies came round them, and one, who was very bold, sat on the brow of one of the brothers. “Sit quite quiet, without moving,” the other brother told him. He took his gun, aimed carefully and shot the fly quite dead.

80. WE—OWE—THREE KREUTZERS

THREE villagers of Lahitsch wanted to learn Tatar, and for that reason they went to Schemache. But they soon saw it was not to be so easy as they had expected, and so they made up their minds to return to their own village. But they had learned something. Each of them had learned one word. The first one had learned "we," the second had learned "owe," and the third, "three kreutzers."

So they returned to their village, where the people do not speak Tatar, but Tatian. On the way they kept up a lively conversation about what they had seen and heard in the town. Suddenly they came upon a dead body, examined it, and wondered how the man had met his death. Unfortunately for them, one of the Chan's mounted policeman was passing and came upon them. As they were all standing round the body, he naturally thought they were suspicious characters.

"Who killed that man?" he asked, naturally in the Tatar tongue.

"We," answered the one who knew that word.

"Why? What was your reason?"

"Owe," said the second.

"What! *Owe!* One does not kill a man because he owes one something. How much did he owe you?"

"Three kreutzers," said the third.

With little ceremony the policeman then bound the hands of the three and took them to the Chan. They gave him the same answer when he questioned them, and so he had them put in prison.

But when he had thought over the whole thing, it seemed to him impossible that murderers should confess

their deed so openly; that would only happen if they were very stupid, and so he made up his mind to test the degree of their stupidity. They were brought to him, he had two plates put before them, one with grapes, the other with beetles, and he invited them to help themselves liberally. When the three put out their hands, the beetles began to run away. "Brothers, eat first the grapes that can run away," one of them called to the other two.¹

On that the Chan let them run away too.

81. HOW THE PEOPLE OF KERKENDJ² WENT TO CUT WOOD

THE people of Kerkendj once went with their priest into the forest to cut wood. And on the way they quarrelled as to whose axe was the sharpest. The priest held that his was the sharpest because he was the *terter*—that is, the priest; another said his was the sharpest because he was a peasant; the third had another reason; in short, each praised his own axe and none would give way.

Then they saw a Tatar coming towards them; he was riding a mare whose foal trotted beside its mother. The villagers appealed to him, he should settle their dispute. The Tatar took one axe after another, tried it and stuck it in his saddle-bag. When he had collected them all,

¹ This story has already given rise to a proverb among the Tatars of that district, or rather a joke against the villagers of Lahitsch. "Katschaqi muchur"—"Eat the running ones," they say.

² Kerkendj is an Armenian village near Schemache. The people of Kerkendj formerly enjoyed a reputation for extraordinary stupidity.

he struck his mare a blow and galloped away. The villagers were highly indignant at his faithlessness and ran after him. They ran and ran, but could not overtake him. They did succeed, however, in catching the foal.

"Yes," said one of them, "but what is the good of that? The foal will of course run after its mother whenever we let it loose. We must think of a way to keep it."

They thought hard, and finally came to the conclusion that if they put a very heavy load on the back of the little creature, it would not be able to run away. Yes, but what were they to load it with? They had nothing with them except their clothes. So they undressed, and put everything on the back of the foal; only the priest kept on his trousers.

Hardly had they let the foal go, than it cheerfully and merrily broke into a trot. And this time the villagers could not catch it again.

They sat there, without axes and without clothes. The priest had the best of it; he had at least his trousers. The others soon noticed that, and then he was in for it. "He was to blame, because he alone had not put his trousers on the foal's back. He! He alone! Accursed priest!" And they beat him with a vengeance. But it was really not so bad, for they had no sticks and the priest had already lived through many things with his flock.

Then another consideration dawned on them. To go home without axes, without clothes, without wood! No, that would never do! They must at least have wood. And that was possible even without axes. Upon a hill near by there stood a young tree. They would seize it with their hands and pull till they had pulled it out. The priest held on to the tree, the second held on to the priest, the third held on to the second, and so on till

there was a whole long chain of them—when all at once a mosquito stung the priest in the neck, he let go to kill it, and the whole band went plump into the ravine.

Whether they ever got out again, or whether they are lying there to this day, nobody knows. One thing only is certain, the wife of the priest did not need to wear mourning.

82. THE DONKEY'S EGG

KIRAKOS, Mayor of Kerkendj, once went on business into the town. As he passed through the bazaar, he saw in the shop of a certain Tatar a heap of egg-shaped things—they were melons—and he asked the Tatar what kind of strange things these were.

"Why, friend," said he, "these are donkey's eggs."

"What? Donkey's eggs? Then do little donkeys come out of them?"

"And *what* little donkeys!" said the Tatar, who could only stifle his laughter with difficulty.

Kirakos then bought, for three times its proper price, the largest melon, and set out homewards.

On his way he stopped and laid his melon down for a moment, but unfortunately at a steep and slippery place. The melon began to roll, and striking hard against the root of a tree, it burst open. But a hare had been sitting behind that tree. It now sprang up in alarm and rushed away. Kirakos ran after it, thinking it was the little donkey which had just come out of the egg. He ran after it calling, "Kuri, kuri" (which means little donkey); "come, I am your master, come."

But the hare did not seem to hear in spite of its long ears. Kirakos called it till he was tired, then he gave it

up. It was late before he got home and told his wife all that had happened to him.

She wept a few tears over the loss of the donkey, and said it would have been so nice if she had been able to ride to the monastery the next Sunday on the donkey to kiss the hand of the abbot.

"What!" cried Kirakos in a great rage, "you would do that? You would ride about the world on a little creature like that? You would break the poor creature's back, that's what you would do."

So saying, he seized a stick and gave vent to his wrath on his wife's back, only stopping when she promised him to go to the monastery on foot.

83. THE STUPID PEOPLE OF AUCH¹

SOME of the natives of Auch had bought themselves beautiful new brown boots at the bazaar, and now they sat in a circle together, not able to take their eyes off their boots or to admire them enough. They sat thus for a long time; it was evening, and the bazaar had gradually emptied. Then someone came to them and asked why they did not go away. "Well," the people of Auch explained, "we are in a difficult position. We should like to go home, but with these new boots on, which all look so like each other, we can no longer say which are our own legs." "Well, well," said the other. "*Something* can be done to help you." So saying, he made his riding-switch dance on their backs. The people sprang up and in a moment each had found his own legs.

¹ Auch is the name of a district in Tchetchen: it lies beside the rivers Aktasch and Jarakssu.

Once three natives of Auch were travelling through the country and came to a cave. They thought there might very likely be a fox in it, and one of them crawled in to see. But a bear was sitting in the cave, who tore off the head of the intruder with one blow of his paw. As the man showed no sign of life, the two others presently pulled him out and saw that his head was wanting, but neither of them could remember whether he had always had a head or not. Then one of them hastened back to his village and asked the wife of the dead man if her husband had really had a head before. "I cannot remember for certain," she answered, "but I know this, that every year I made him a new cap."

Some natives of Auch once saw a sack lying at the foot of the steep river-bank. As they could not possibly climb down to it, they determined to make a chain of themselves. The first held tightly to a tree, the others formed the chain, holding fast by each other's hands. Then something tickled the first one's head and he wanted to scratch it. "Let my left hand go for a moment, I must scratch my head," he said to the second. "Good! But be quick about it," said the second, letting go, and . . . all with the exception of the first fell into the water.

XI

STORIES OF MULLAH NASREDDIN

84 (1)

A WAG, who was carrying fifteen eggs in a cloth, met Mullah Nasreddin one day, and determined to make merry at his expense.

"Mullah," he said, "if you guess what I have in my cloth, I will give you the half of my eggs for nothing; and if you guess how many there are, then you shall have the whole fifteen."

The mullah thought over it for a long time and at last he spoke:

"My friend, you are a fool! I am not God, nor am I His nephew, and except God no one can know what you have in your cloth. But if you tell me what the things look like, I might perhaps guess."

"Well, white outside, yellow inside, and the whole longish."

"I have it already! White turnips filled with yellow ginger."

(2)

Soon after the mullah had become a widower, he married again and his wife presented him in three months with a son. After a little time the female relatives of the mullah and of his wife came to choose a name for the child. Each of them suggested one; but the mullah commanded silence and said:

"I will give this child a name. He shall be called Hasid (quick-runner)."

"But, but . . . that is not a name at all!" expostulated the women.

"Yes. The child made a journey of nine months in three; it deserves the name of Hasid."

(3)

AT a meeting in which Mullah Nasreddin was taking part, youth and age were spoken of among other things. Every speaker had something to say about the failure of physical powers in old age. And now they wanted to know the mullah's opinion. He gave it in these words:

"There lies in our house an enormous stone which even as a young man I could not lift. Neither can I lift it now. Therefore a man is no weaker in old age than in youth."

(4)

ONE day Mullah Nasreddin went with a basket into someone else's garden and began to steal. But it was not long before the gardener came along with a stick in his hand, accosted the mullah and shouted at him:

"Who are you, and why do you come to our garden?"

Nasreddin was so taken aback by the sudden appearance of the gardener that he did not find an answer at once, but at last he stammered:

"Well, well, I was walking along the road, when all at once a strong wind came and blew me, poor creature that I am, into this garden."

"Very good," said the gardener, "but why did you tear up these vegetables?"

"Do not be angry, dear gardener," said the mullah, "reflect a moment. How could I stand against such a wind if I did not hold on to something? I suppose that must have been how I tore up the vegetables."

"Good, we will leave it at that. But how do the vegetables come to be in your basket?"

"Well, I was just thinking that over myself when you arrived. You have now disturbed me, and I have not yet had time to think out the real reason."

(5)

WHEN the mullah was asked if he was good at counting, he answered that he was indeed so good at it, that no sum was too difficult for him. In order to test him, he was asked to divide four drachmen equally between three of those present. The mullah said, "That is very simple. To two of them we give two drachmen each. The third we ask to wait. When God sends us two drachmen more, he will get them."

(6)

MULLAH NASREDDIN was once returning home from a journey, heavily armed. In one hand he held a sword, in the other a pistol. All of a sudden someone stopped him and robbed him. He did not even leave him his trousers.

When the mullah got home and told what had happened to him, he was asked why he had not defended himself.

"How could I then?" he answered. "Both my hands were full. If I had had my hands free, I would have strangled him."

(7)

"WHY do you eat the nuts with their shells on?" they asked Nasreddin one day.

"Because I have paid for them. It would be more sensible if you asked the fruit merchant why he is so unscrupulous as to *sell* the nuts with their shells on."

(8)

ONCE when Mullah Nasreddin was still a boy, he was sent by his father to a Kellapas¹ to bring back a sheep's head. But on the way home he ate up all the eatable parts and brought back nothing but the bare skull.

"My son, there is nothing there but the skull," said his father. "What has happened to the ears?"

"Perhaps," said the mullah, "that sheep came into the world without ears."

"And the eyes?"

"It must apparently have been born blind."

"And the tongue?"

"It was evidently a dumb sheep."

"And what did you do with the skin of the head?"

"Ah, father, that must have been a mangy sheep—But just look what beautiful teeth it has. Not even one is missing!"

(9)

ONE evening Mullah Nasreddin was very hungry, but there was nothing to eat in the house except a piece of dry bread.

"Wife," he said, "bring me a little cheese. Cheese

¹ The keeper of a restaurant who prepared nothing but the sheep's head so much thought of in the Orient.

is a very good and useful food, it gives both strength and energy."

"It is only a pity," she replied, "that we have not even the tiniest morsel of it in the house."

"No? Well, that is a good thing," the mullah replied. "Cheese is not much use in any case; it destroys one's stomach, loosens one's teeth and tastes of nothing."

"Well, which on earth am I to believe?" asked his wife: "your first remark or your second?"

"Do not shout," he replied. "That is quite simple and easy. If you have cheese, believe what I told you first. But if you have no cheese, believe what I told you second."

(10)

A NEIGHBOUR came to Mullah Nasreddin one day and asked him for the loan of a piece of olkāna.¹

"I cannot. My wife is drying grain on it."

"But, mullah, surely no one can dry grain on an olkāna! If you do not want to lend it to me, then tell me so straight out."

"If I had not wanted to lend it to you, I would have said something else, namely, that she was drying flour upon it."

(11)

ONE day Mullah Nasreddin was sitting in the house reading. But the boys of the village were playing in front of his window and making a terrible noise. Nasreddin stuck his head out of the window and cried:

"Children! Go down to the bazaar. Apples are being given away there for nothing."

¹ A flat pleated rope or girth.

The children did not wait to be told twice, but ran away as fast as their legs could carry them. And when the mullah saw them running, he said, "Just look! Perhaps it is true." And he ran after them.¹

(12)

MULLAH NASREDDIN came one day to a brook. He made a great leap, and fell right into it. "Ah for the years of my youth!" he sighed. But when he saw there was no one there to hear, he added, "Even in my youth I could not have jumped that."

(13)

ONE day Mullah Nasreddin went into the forest with his donkey to fetch wood. He climbed up a tree, and was just about to cut off the branch on which he was sitting, when someone went by underneath and said, "Mullah, leave that alone, or you will fall down." Nasreddin thought it a joke and struck merrily away. But when the branch fell, he fell with it. He wondered about it and ran after the man. "You knew beforehand that I should fall down," he said, "you probably know too when I shall die?" "Yes, certainly I know that," said the man, who wanted to get rid of the mullah, "you will die when your donkey has hee-hawed three times."

Shaking his head sadly, the mullah went away and loaded his donkey with wood. On the way home they

¹ This joke is widely known. It is told of Marius, the typical braggadocio of Marseilles, that he met a friend one day on the street who was in a great hurry. To play a joke on him, Marius told him that he should run quickly to the harbour, for a gigantic sardine had just blocked up the entrance. The friend ran off, calling out the news to everyone he met. And when Marius saw everyone running towards the harbour, he said, "Look at that! Perhaps it is really true after all. I will go down myself and see!" And ran after the others.

had to go over a hill, and hardly had they begun the ascent before the donkey hee-hawed for the first time.

"Once!" cried the mullah, terribly frightened; "a third time and my soul is gone."

And in the middle of the slope the donkey let its voice be heard again.

"Twice!" said the mullah—"only a third part of my soul now remains to me."

Upon the top of the hill it happened for the third time.

"Thrice! I am dead," said Nasreddin, went to the side of the road and lay down. But the donkey began to graze.

It did not graze long, for soon some wolves came along and seized it.

"Ah, if I were only still living," said Nasreddin, "I would show you what I would do! Poor donkey! Now I can do nothing for you."

(14)

NASREDDIN's wife had a lover. In order to punish her, Nasreddin said to her, "All our household animals are dead with the exception of the cow. Now there stands in the wood a hollow plane-tree; it knows which animals one should keep, in order that they may multiply. Go and ask it. But do not forget to take pancakes with you, or you will learn nothing from the tree." His wife baked a great pile of pancakes and went into the forest to look for the speaking plane-tree. But the mullah followed her by another path. He arrived before her and crept into the hollow of the tree. Soon his wife arrived too; the mullah asked her in a feigned voice whether she had brought pancakes with her. "If you have," he added, "cover your face with a cloth, look down to the ground

and give them to me." When she had handed over the pancakes, he asked further, "Would you like to ask questions or will you listen to me?" "My husband told me you would speak yourself." "If that is so, then answer my question—which do you love most, your husband or your lover?" His question so dismayed the poor woman that she could not answer. "If you cannot answer me, then I can tell you nothing," came the voice out of the hollow tree. "I like my lover best," she said at last. "Then listen to my advice, kill your last cow; if your husband eats of its flesh, he will become blind and deaf, and then you will be free to live with your lover." The woman was much pleased with this advice, and set out for home in good spirits. When she had gone, Mullah Nasreddin first ate his pancakes and then ran quickly home, where he arrived before her. When she came in she said, "The plane-tree told me that everything would go well with us if you kill the last cow and eat the meat yourself." Nasreddin killed the animal. When there was only enough meat left to serve for one meal he said, "I see no more and I hear no more. At one time everyone spoke my name with respect; now they talk of me as 'that blind blockhead.' I will not go outside the house any more, for I cannot stand that. Make a corner ready for me." But on this same evening the wife put two pots on the fire, one with the rest of the meat for her husband, the other with meat she had bought for herself and her lover, whom she had sent for. When he came and heard from her how things stood with the mullah, he said, "I am very tired to-day, I will lie down and sleep a little and after supper we will play a game." Then he lay down and went to sleep. But Mullah Nasreddin took advantage of a moment when his wife left the room, poured boiling water in the mouth

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of the sleeping man, and so killed him. When supper was ready the woman wanted to waken her lover, and when she noticed that he was dead she said to her husband, "Someone has brought us a dead body to the house. What shall I do with it?" The mullah pretended he did not hear; his wife went nearer and shouted in his ear. "Who is it? Where did he live?" he asked. And his wife told him everything. "Put him on my back and lead me to his house." She did that; and when they arrived at the place he said, "Go home and leave me alone here; I will find my way back with the help of my stick." When his wife was gone, Mullah Nasreddin went up to the door and called, imitating the voice of the dead man, "Wife, open the door!" "No," someone called from within, "you can stay with your lover." "I am dying," groaned Nasreddin, "open the door." But the door remained shut. "I am dead," said Mullah Nasreddin, leant the body up against the door and went away.

The next morning the woman found the body of her husband and said, weeping, "Ah, my husband was not lying. It is true what he said, he was dying." But Nasreddin's wife, who had to go to the house of mourning to mourn the dead, asked her husband what she should say to the widow.

"Just say this, 'He also had to die and leave you, whose time was not yet come.'" She went and said that, and the relatives, enraged beyond endurance, stabbed her with their daggers.

FINIS

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